...AND DISCUSSED PARALLEL UNIVERSES WITH A CAT.
THE SUMMER I TURNED THIRTEEN, I SAT ON THE ROOF OF MY SCHOOL...
I BELIEVE THEY'RE CALLED "PARALLEL UNIVERSES."
DOZENS OF OTHER WORLDS EXIST, IN DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS.
I'M SURE ALL KIDS DO THIS AT LEAST ONCE IN THEIR LIFETIME.
IT WAS KIND OF A STRANGE DAY.
...BUT DON'T YOU FIND IT ODD?
IN THOSE OTHER WORLDS, IT'S PERFECTLY NORMAL FOR CATS TO TALK...

# Voice or Noise 1

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Yamimaru Enjin Presents

Afterwords 179

Voice or Noise
01

THAT IS WHY THERE ARE THEORETICALLY 11 VARIABLES.
THIS IS THE BASIS OF M'S THEORY.
SUPERSTRING THEORY IS SUPERIOR, BUT IT'S STILL FULL OF RIDDLES.
BUT IN TERMS OF ASTROPHYSICS, IT EXPLAINS A LOT ABOUT THE BIG BANG.
AT LEAST, THAT'S WHAT THE EXPERTS HOPE. AND THAT'S ALL FOR TODAY.
YOUR RESEARCH PAPERS WILL DISCUSS THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NEWTONIAN MECHANICS AND QUANTUM MECHANICS THEY'RE DUE IN SEPTEMBER THAT IS ALL.
tap
AND DON'T SLACK OFF JUST BECAUSE IT'S SUMMER SESSION.
WE'LL DISCUSS THE SUBJECT FURTHER TOMORROW.

?
So, what's a "parallel universe"?
Do you honestly expect me to explain it all over again, ya little punk?

IS ONE PAGE TOO SHORT?
HEY, PROF?
UH, SEE--
...IT'S ABOUT MY DOG.
YEAH
UH, I'M NOT SURE HOW TO PUT THIS, BUT...
whump
IF YOU WANT TO PASS... MAKE IT LONG.
AH!
OH. SORRY 'BOUT THAT.
I'M SORRY TO BOTHER YOU, BUT... I NEED YOUR HELP.
YOU'RE NARUSAWA NARUAKI-SAN, RIGHT?
THE ASSISTANT PROFESSOR?
HELP?
HUH?
W-WAIT! I'M NOT DONE!
FIVE PAGES MINIMUM.
AWW, MAN!
Is he in junior high?
YOU DON'T SEEM OLD ENOUGH TO BE A STUDENT HERE.
IT'LL ONLY TAKE A MOMENT!
HEY, KID.
PROFESSOR NARUSAWA!
PLEASE! JUST LISTEN TO WHAT MY DOG HAS TO SAY!
UH...!

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HIM?
ROAR
Huh?
WHOA!
Look at that aura!
WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?!
THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK, YOU IDIOT! CAN'T YOU SEE THE TENSION IN THE AIR?!
Oof!!
BUT THAT KID SAID THAT BEFORE, AND--

Bwah?!
PROFES-SOR...
...YOU CAN TALK TO ANIMALS!!
USA

YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT.
I HEAR HE'S ALWAYS FEEDING THE CATS AT BUILDING TWO.
DOES HE HATE THEM?
HUH? WHY?
...AROUND NARUSAWA-SAN.
NOT SO LOUD! IT'S TOTAL TABOO TO DISCUSS ANIMALS...
DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY. THE PROFESSOR GAVE HIM THE EVIL EYE LAST TIME, TOO.

THEY FOLLOW HIM AROUND AND STUFF.
...ANIMALS HAVE ALWAYS LOVED HIM.
AND Y'KNOW...
.....
gone
PROFESSOR?

WHAT'D I SAY?

HEY, PROFES-SOR?
CAN YOU REALLY TALK TO ANIMALS?

I KNOW, I KNOW. CALM DOWN.
SHINI-CHIRO?
Wheeze
Woof! Woof!
Woof! Woof!
FLAPPY.
SORRY, IT DIDN'T WORK OUT.
Meow
Erk
FREAKY! LIKE AN OUTTAKE FROM THE BIRDS.
SOMETIMES IT'S A PACK OF STRAY DOGS, OR A MURDER OF CROWS CREEPY!
ARE YOU SERIOUS?
I ALWAYS PRETEND I DIDN'T SEE.
I hide
YOU SHOULD'VE RESCUED HIM.
AH HA HA HA HA
Woof! Woof!
Click
I'M HOME.
OH, SHINICHIRO, ARE YOU HERE TO GREET ME?
I'm touched
Whew!
Hah!
YOUR GRADES BETTER BE GOOD!
Got it?
SHINICHIRO, ARE YOU LISTENING?!
YEAH, YEAH. WHAT IS IT?
YOU GOT YOUR PRACTICE TEST RESULTS, RIGHT? WHAT WERE THEY? THIS IS YOUR LAST YEAR OF JUNIOR HIGH
YOU CAN'T GOOF OFF ALL SUMMER
DID YOU TAKE FLAPPY-BOY FOR A WALK?
Hmm?
I'm not here for you
HUH?
HE WON'T GO!
H...!
DOES HE EMIT SPECIAL PHEROMONES OR SOMETHING?
Gah! Shut up!
Woof!
Woof!
Meow
Meow

Sniff...
Whuff!
IT'LL BE OKAY, FLAPPY.
IT'LL BE OKAY.
Has old could he be senile?
.. HE BARKED AND HOWLED AT NOTHING ALL DAY. WHEN WE TOOK HIM OUT, HE ATTACKED SOME OTHER DOGS AND BIT THEM!
YES. WE TOOK HIM TO THE VET, BUT...
Snort
IS HE STILL FEELING BAD?
Sniff
FLAPPY, SHAKE!
SHAKE HANDS!
Ignore
YES, YES THAT'S A GOOD BOY.
...GUESS WHAT HE LEFT IN SHINICHIRO'S ROOM?
THE OTHER DAY...
Hmm
A DEAD CAT. WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO THAT DOG?
I WONDER.
Ikegami Animal Hospital
HMM.
THIS IS A PROBLEM..

HEH HEH!
Pat pat
Ack!
OH! A JUNIOR HIGH STUDENT? WHERE, WHERE?
RUN ALONG HOME.
BUT AT LEAST HE DOESN'T PLAY MEAN JOKES LIKE YOU.
I MEAN, REALLY! HE'S A COLLEGE PROFESSOR!
ANIMAL COMMUNICATION? YOU READ A LOT OF MANGA, SONNY?
IT MUST BE PSYCHO-LOGICAL
SO?
Grrr
I KNOW.
HE'S NOT A YOUNG DOG, BUT...
...THERE'S NOTHING WRONG PHYSICALLY HE'S IN PERFECT HEALTH
WELL...
Grrr
HOW DID IT GO WITH NARUSAWA?
TERRIBLE.
I figured
HE WAS A TOTAL JERK!
TEASING IS ONE THING, BUT HE STEPPED OVER THE LINE!
Hah, Well
YOU COULD SAY THAT.
He's in a bad mood
I DIDN'T GET A CHANCE
DID YOU SAY WHY YOU CAME?
MEAN JOKES?
YEAH.
He said it
HE SAID HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT I WAS TALKING ABOUT, AND HE DIDN'T KNOW YOU!
IS HE REALLY YOUR FRIEND?
TALKING TO ANIMALS? PFFT!
THAT DOESN'T HAPPEN IN REAL LIFE. ONLY IN MANGA AND MOVIES.
IT'S STUPID!

TALKING WITH ANIMALS? GIVE ME A BREAK
"WHAT ARE WE GOING TO PLAY TODAY?"
"SHIN-CHAN"
"WELL?"
WHOA!
BUT I GUESS... IT REALLY .. CAN HAPPEN.
I DON'T EVEN BELIEVE IT MYSELF.
Huff
DO YOU REALLY THINK SO?
Huff
Well?
Tell me what's wrong
REALLY, WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU?
Huff
Huff Huff
GRRR!
Woof woof!!
KNOCK IT OFF!
STOP IT, FLAPPY!
Hissssss!
I THINK IT'S REAL...
Bow wow! Woof! Ow-woo!!
BESIDES...
IF I HADN'T MET THAT CAT, I WOULDN'T BELIEVE ME EITHER...
Huff
NO, BUT...
TRY TALKING TO HIM AGAIN.
EXPLAIN YOUR PROBLEM.
WAIT!
FORGET IT. I'LL HANDLE THIS MYSELF!

...YOU BLEW OFF THAT KID?
NO. IS THIS THE SAME WAY...
I'M BUSY RIGHT NOW. CAN THIS WAIT 'TIL LATER?
HUFF
Dammit!
Tug
IS HE SCREWING WITH ME?
Next time I'll let it go to voicemail
IMAGINE HIS FEELINGS. WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR COMPASSION, NARUAKI?
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU WOULDN'T EVEN LISTEN TO HIM.
SHUT UP! I THREW IT IN THE GODDAMN RIVER, THAT'S WHAT!
CLICK
HEY.
FLAPPY!
FWAP
PLA--
WHA--?! FLAPPY! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
HUH?
HEY! WAIT UP, FLAPPY!
What is it this time?!
YO.

THERE'S A GUY.. CLIMBING THE WALL...
A burglar?!
WHAT'S THIS?
WHAT'S HE DOING UP THERE?
NARUSAWA-SAN?!
Right route, or left?
OH, IS THIS WHAT THEY CALL FREE-CLIMBING?
Hmm?
I NEED THE CHALK POWDER.
HEY, ACHT, YOU LISTENING?
OH, THE CHALK?
WAIT, IS THAT...?
HEY, I'M OUT OF CHALK.
YOU MIND GETTING MY BAG?

!!
haah
haah
haah
haah
haah
FLOPPY!
.....
HFF

Narusawa's one bedroom apartment
Sssdy!
OH, THIS IS WHERE YOU LIVE?
HMPH!
YEAH ISN'T THAT WHY YOU'RE HERE?
YOU WANTED TO ARGUE SOME MORE?
Not really.
I DIDN'T MEAN TO END UP HERE, AND I'M SORRY TO HAVE INTRUDED!
I GOT LOST WHILE WE WERE ON OUR WALK
C'MON, FLAPPY! LET'S GO!
I GATHER IKEGAMI GAVE YOU SOME CRAZY IDEAS.
WHOA, WHOA WAIT UP
YOU SHOULD SWITCH HOSPITALS.
...!

AND YOU ARE...?
Y-YOU AGAIN?!
HA HA HA!
DIDN'T SEE YOU THERE!
?
UH, EXCUSE ME!
WHERE'S YOUR CHALK?
RIGHT. YOU'RE THAT JUNIOR HIGH KID.
FUKUOJI SHINICHIRO.
POINT
Ahem
SO...
...WHY DID YOU COME ALL THE WAY TO MY HOUSE?
UH, YEAH I WANTED TO APOLOGIZE ABOUT LAST TIME

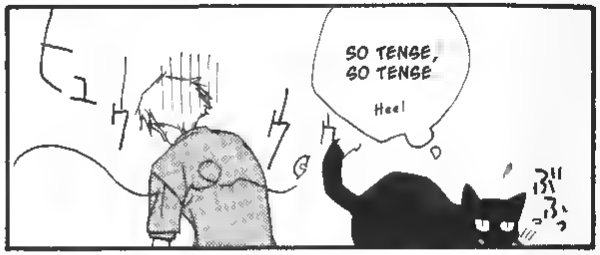
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
Hiss
WHAT?
カリ子...
カリ子...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO SAY.
IF YOU'RE THAT LOYAL...
YEAH. IT'S A PROBLEM.
カリ子っ
THERE'S NO WAY I'M GOING TO CHANGE HOSPITALS NOW!
THEY'VE TOLD ME TO PUT HIM TO SLEEP, OR SEND HIM TO A SPA.
...I'VE BEEN TO TONS OF HOSPITALS ALREADY, AND NONE OF THEM HAVE HELPED.
WHATEVER! THANKS FOR YOUR CONCERN, BUT..
OR IKEGAMI IS THE ONLY ONE WHO LISTENED TO ME!
SO HE'S A LITTLE WEIRD! HE'S A GOOD MAN!
ER...
Hiss
HM?
NO! NOT A CHANCE, NO WAY!
WELL, THIS IS HARD TO EXPLAIN, BUT...

HEY THERE. WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?
Oh. It's a cat
HM?
YOU'VE GOT TO HELP PEOPLE ONCE IN A WHILE.
NARUNARU, Y'KNOW IT'S NOT GOOD TO BE SO SHY.
?
?
I VOTE WE CONTINUE THIS CONVERSATION INSIDE, WHERE IT'S COOL.
ANYWAY, HOW 'BOUT WE DON'T STAND AROUND IN THE BLISTERING SUN?
!
WHAAAT?!
SO IT'S "SHINICHIRO," HUH? SAME AS IN "TOMONAGA SHINICHIRO"?
INTERESTING.
IT MEANS "EIGHT" IN GERMAN.
I'M CALLED "ACHT."
He's talking. Ha ha ha
OH THAT'S— COOL?
WAIT. GERMAN?! YOU SPEAK GERMAN, TOO?!
Incredible!
ENGLISH, TOO.
YOU MAY CONSIDER ME A CAT-INTELLECTUAL
Proud!!
Hmph
In German "cat" is feminine. But I'm a guy.

SHIN-CHAN!
SHIN-CHAN!
Oh ho!
LOOKS LIKE SOMEBODY'S INTERESTED IN NARUNARU
GOSH. HE MADE A FACE LIKE...
...HE'D MESSED UP SOMEHOW.
AH-HA! POOP TIME! POOP TIME!
KNOCK IT OFF
Pass
SOMETHING LIKE, UH.
WOW! SAY SOMETHING IN GERMAN!
OH. WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
...INTRIGUINGLY MYSTERIOUS.
And so young for a professor
AM NOT!
HE'S JUST...
Or I won't change your litter box
That's not fair!
HEH HEH. IT'S STRANGE
NARUSAWA-SAN CAN TALK TO HIM TOO.
SO I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE
LIKE WHEN I FIRST FOUND OUT ABOUT ACHT.
THE BATH-ROOM
MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME.
ARE YOU TWO OLD FRIENDS?
PHI
NARUNARU DOESN'T EVEN GET MAD...
WHEN I CALL HIM NARUNARU
HE SEEMS BRUSQUE, BUT HE'S A GOOD GUY. DON'T BE PUT OFF.
NUH-UH! NARUNARU'S JUST SHY.
IS NARUSAWA-SAN ALWAYS LIKE THIS?

They're lovers.
SO DON'T TRY TO COME BETWEEN THEM. THEIR PASSION KNOWS NO BOUNDS!
YEP!
YOU MIGHT GET CAUGHT IN A LOVER'S QUARREL

HMM, YEAH. I GUESS IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
SO, YOU KNOW DR. IKEGAMI, TOO?
YUP.

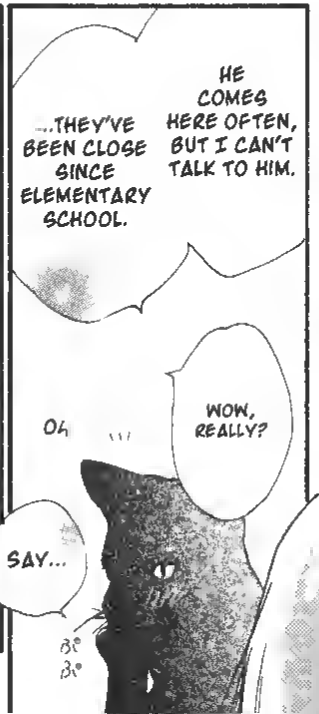

SO TENSE, SO TENSE
Heel

THAT'S AN EASY REQUEST.
YOU MEAN INTERPRET?

CAN YOU TALK TO MY DOG, FLAPPY?
BY THE WAY, ACHT..
AH!

A quick recovery
Tsk

THIS CAN NEVER LEAVE THE ROOM, BUT FOR THE RECORD...
Hmm?


...THEY'VE BEEN CLOSE SINCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.
HE COMES HERE OFTEN, BUT I CAN'T TALK TO HIM.
Oh
WOW, REALLY?
SAY...

HE'S BEING AWFULLY WELL-BEHAVED.
AND?
I SEE. HMM, HMM, HMM
HUH?
MAYBE THIS WILL WORK!
WELL? WHAT'D HE SAY?
...WOOF, WOOF, WOOF.
WELL, SHIN-CHAN, FLADDY SAID
YEAH, YEAH?
HUH?
HE SAID WOOF, WOOF, WOOF.
JUST WHAT I SAID
SHINICHIRO-KUN
OOF!
But he really did say woof!
HUH?
YOU JERK--! YOU SHOULD'VE TOLD HIM YOU DON'T SPEAK DOG
HUH?
YES?
LOOK
IT'S GETTING LATE. YOU SHOULD GO HOME
BUT!
I STILL HAVE QUESTIONS FOR ACHT!
ALSO..
CONDITION?
YOUR MOTHER WILL BE WORRIED.
OKAY?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT FLADDY. IF HIS CONDITION DOESN'T IMPROVE...
..YOU CAN COME BACK.
OH!

...NO.
NARUSAWA-SAN, YOU REALLY CAN...
...TALK WITH ANIMALS, CAN'T YOU?
HEY.
FLAPPY?
NO WAY!
!
きちん。
DID HE...
...HINT THAT I'M A BAD OWNER?
I'LL DO WHATEVER HE ASKS.
JUST TELL ME.
DON'T HIDE IT ANYMORE. TELL ME!
YOU CAN, RIGHT?
WHAT DID FLAPPY SAY?
DID HE SAY ANYTHING ABOUT ME?
HE'S A GOOD DOG.
RIGHT, NARUSAWA-SAN?
YEAH.
I KNEW IT! Heh heh!
He's back to normal!
THIS IS AMAZING! WHAT HAPPENED? IT'S PERFECT!
SIT!
SHAKE! OTHER HAND NOW
DID YOU SEE THAT?!
I KNEW HE WAS A GOOD BOY.
RIGHT?

I WONDER WHY?
IT'S SO STRANGE...
YOU DIDN'T TELL THAT KID WHAT'S GOING ON?
SO?

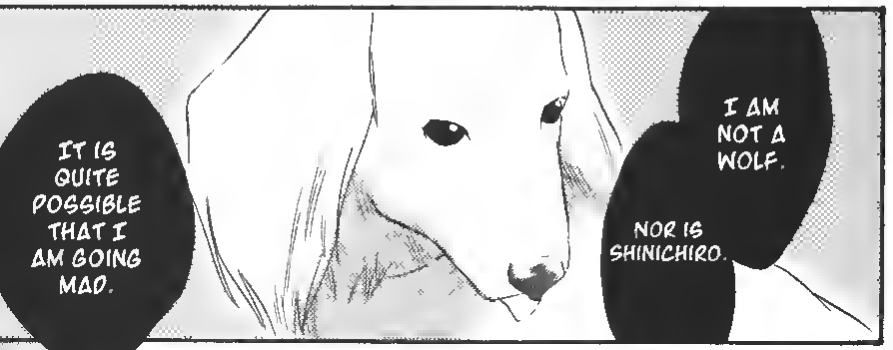
...NARUSAWA-SAN'S ATTITUDE WAS SO STRANGE.
HE SAID NO, BUT THEN HE BACKTRACKED, SO...
...I'M STILL CONFUSED.
BUT I FEEL A LOT BETTER.

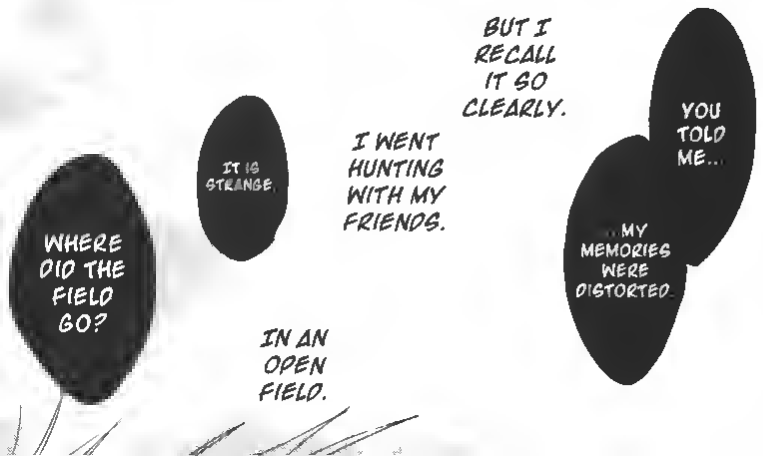
MAYBE ANOTHER TIME.
.....
ANOTHER TIME? WHEN?!
FOR SOME REASON...

!
I'M GETTING SOME CIGARETTES
THE KID'S GOT GUTS.
HE COULD TALK WITH THAT BLACK CAT.
SO IT'S POSSIBLE THAT KID MAY...
...END UP LIKE NARUSAWA.

COME ON. DON'T YOU FEEL SORRY FOR SHINICHIRO-KUN?
WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH IT?
BUT YOU DID, AND YOU EVEN SAID WHY!
I TOLD YOU NOT TO RECOMMEND ME AS A THERAPIST!
YEAH? WHERE?
HE FOUND A GREAT PLACE FOR CLIMBING.
HEY, I GOT AN E-MAIL FROM A FRIEND IN OKINAWA.
WHERE?!
HANG ON.
YOU TELL HIM FOR ME.
YOU'RE AN ADULT, SO EXPRESS YOURSELF LIKE ONE.
THAT KID WAS SO HAPPY, HE RAN HERE TO THANK ME. WITH HIS DOG.
I CAN'T LIVE YOUR LIFE FOR YOU.
THIS IS YOUR FAULT.

FEELING BETTER?
HEY THERE.


IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT I AM GOING MAD.
I AM NOT A WOLF.
NOR IS SHINICHIRO.


WHERE DID THE FIELD GO?
IT IS STRANGE.
I WENT HUNTING WITH MY FRIENDS.
IN AN OPEN FIELD.
BUT I RECALL IT SO CLEARLY.
YOU TOLD ME...
...MY MEMORIES WERE DISTORTED.

I HOPE IT TAKES THE RIGHT ONE.
OR NOT.
NOBODY'LL KNOW IF HE DOESN'T
THE WORLD WILL TAKE ONE PATH OR ANOTHER.

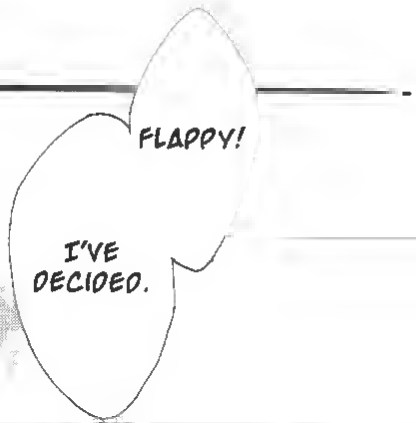
I'VE GIVEN SERIOUS THOUGHT...
...TO WHAT YOU SAID.

MAN...
YOU HAD ME WORRIED!
WHAT?
PROFESSOR NARUSAWA.
DID YOU MAKE ANOTHER PROMISE YOU COULON'T KEEP?
YOU SHOULD TALK.
SHH!
HMM?
I WOULON'T CALL IT BAD
BUT I AM GETTING OLDER
I REGRET THAT...
AM I...
LIFE AS A DOG'S NOT BAD EITHER, IS IT?
...TRULY NOT...
...A WOLF?
I CAN'T TEACH THE CHILD...
huff
...HOW TO HUNT.
HEY!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!

WHAT'S WRONG?
SEE WHAT?
DID YOU SEE THAT?
HEY!
.....
NOTHING

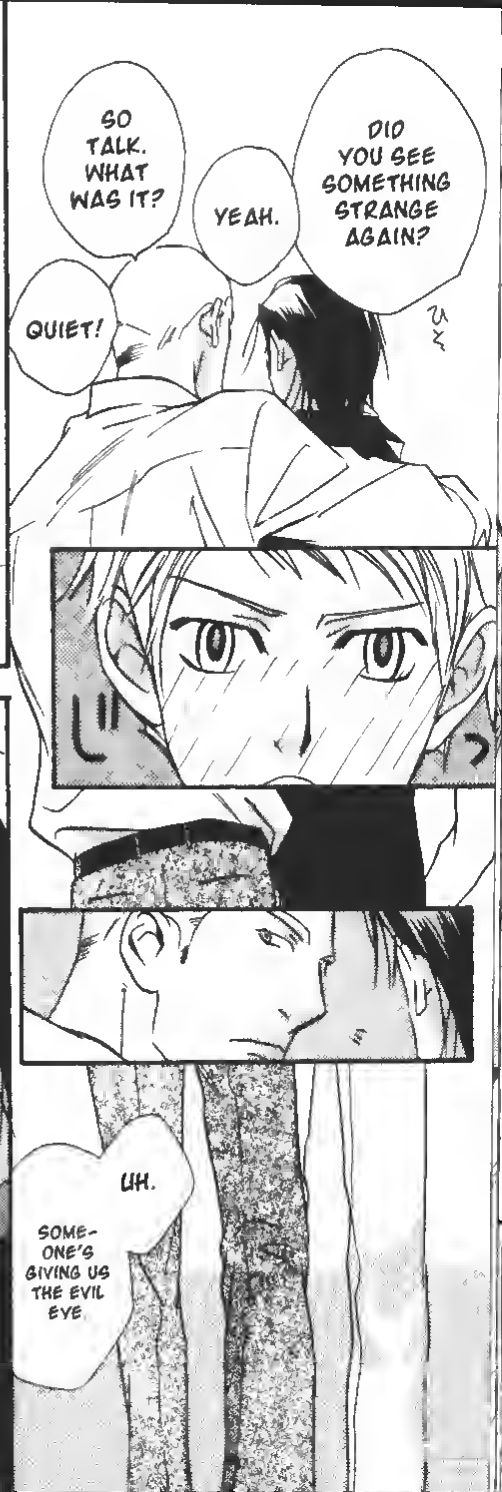
Ha ha!
I THINK WE JUST GAVE HIM A VERY WRONG IDEA.
Whew! My side hurts
WHAT GOT INTO HIM?
EXCUSE ME!
I'll come back later!

Cough
WRONG IDEA?
Never mind
Slow.


FLAPPY!
I'VE DECIDED.

AH.
UM. YOU TWO SURE ARE, UH, CLOSE.

I DIDN'T MEAN TO GET IN THE WAY.
SORRY!


SO TALK. WHAT WAS IT?
YEAH.
DID YOU SEE SOMETHING STRANGE AGAIN?
QUIET!
UH.
SOME-ONE'S GIVING US THE EVIL EYE.

Voice or Noise
call 01

IT'S SETTLED!
I'LL STUDY UNDER NARUSAWA-SAN!
I WANT TO TALK WITH YOU, TOO!
OKAY?

My head hurts.
.....
IT'S A BAD SIGN.
Heeeeey what's up?
sniffle
I want to live only for my equations...
No more animals or people...

call»01 END

SHIN-ICHIRO.
SHE...
...SAYS SHE'S CONSTIPATED.
CONSTI-PATED?!
WHO SAID THAT?!
BECAUSE...
NARUSAWA-SAN SAID SO!
Maybe I misheard
THEN WHAT DID HE SAY?
?
WHAT, IS THAT WRONG?
Nrgh!
AN EGG IS STUCK IN HER BIRTH CANAL. IT'S SIMILAR, BUT...
YOU SEE A LOT OF NARU-SAWA?
WOW.
YOU MASSAGE HER WITH OIL, AND...

Here.
Uh.. Okay.
Oh, you know a vet?
...SO I'D TREAT HER FOR FREE?
SO...
...YOUR FRIEND SHOVED OFF HIS SPARROW ON YOU...
I'M SORRY, I'M SORRY!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, YOU DON'T OWN HER?!
Stalkers every where
I see. I see
That's his excuse, but he's really just stalking Narusawa.
meow
meow
meow
I'M LEARNING TO COMMUNICATE WITH ANIMALS!
UH-HUH!
OF COURSE! I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF INTENSIVE TRAINING!
TRAINING?
Ack!
I THINK SHE'S FEELING BETTER!
BUT! SEE...
Sheesh
KIDS HAVE NO ETHICS NOWADAYS.
Hmm?
Pfft!
Now I feel bad for him
Heh
OH, IS THIS AN EGG? IT'S DENTED.
It's teeny!
YEAH! IT'S SUPER FUN!
I cook for him and clean his house, too!
UM. IS IT FUN?
Heh heh!
WHAT A RELIEF.
SHE'S TELLING YOU, THANK YOU!
WHAT?
YEAH?
SHIN-ICHIRO, YOU...
NAH...
THIS IS COMMON AMONG PET SPARROWS.
HER OWNER WAS NEGLIGENT.
AH...

SO, SHINICHIRO
WHAT?
WHY...
...DID YOU VISIT NARUSAWA WITHOUT CHECKING WITH ME?
WHY?
HUH?

SHIN-ICHIRO.
DOCTOR! DOCTOR?
THE NEXT PATIENTS ARE HERE.
I'M COMING.
I BETTER TAKE OFF.
WAIT A MINUTE.

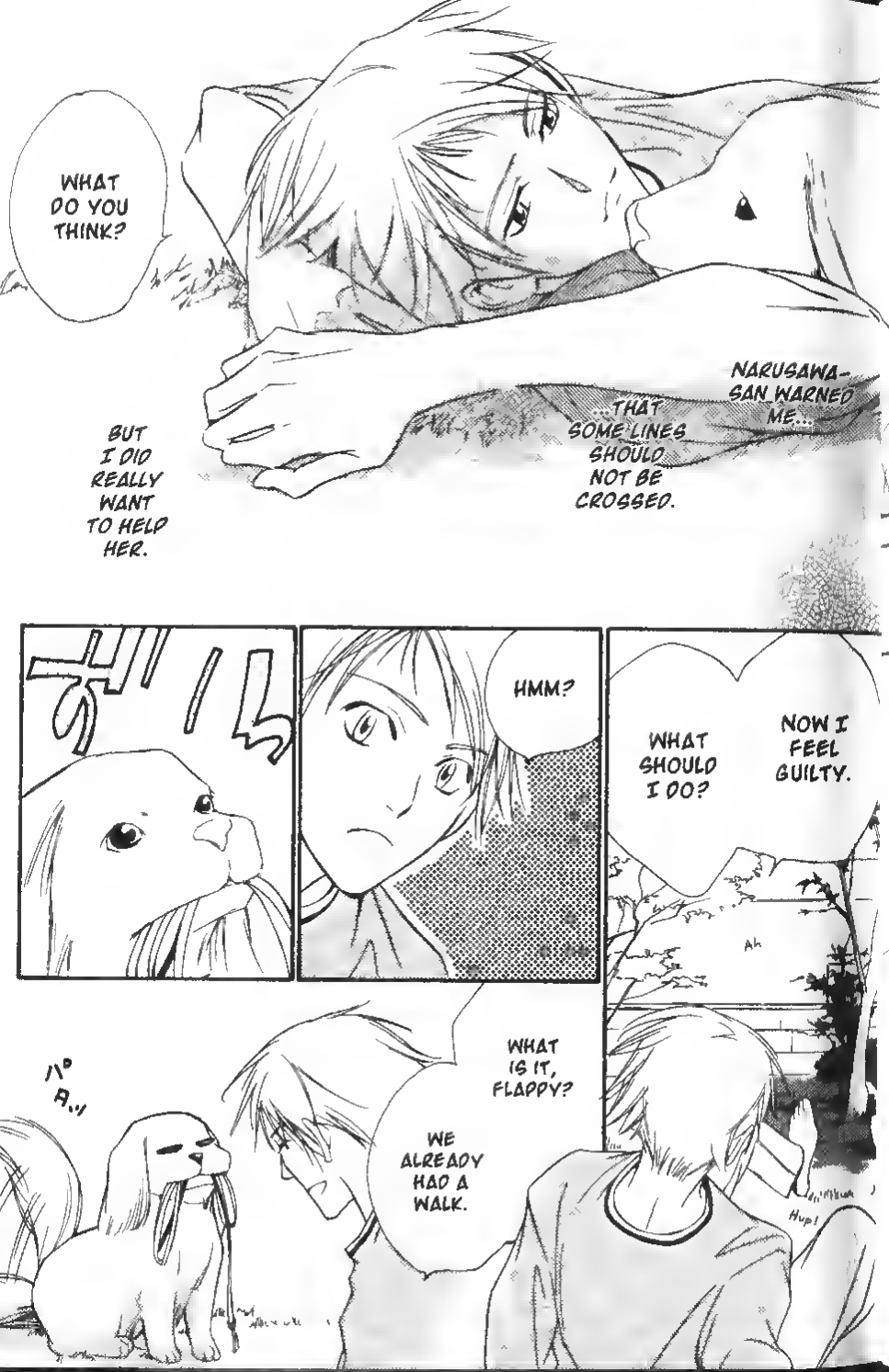
WHY DID HE ACT SO WEIRD ALL OF A SUDDEN?
THANKS, FLAPPY!
...WHEN WE TALK ABOUT NARUSAWA-SAN.
OR. IKEGAMI ALWAYS GETS NERVOUS...
NAH! YOU WOULDN'T DO THAT!
FORGET ABOUT IT!
ARE YOU TESTING HIM?
HUH? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
UHHH... WHY?
TESTING?
.....
OH.
Sheesh!
NEXT TIME, MAKE HER OWNER BRING HER HIMSELF!
I WILL.
THE PATIENT IS HERE.
Hurry up, please!
YES, YES.
IS IT... THAT?
But what's "that"?
IS IT BECAUSE... MAYBE...
The adult world is still mysterious.

So this pattern...
Shift the variable...
Aha! Get it!
HUH? WHY?
HEY, ACHT. SHOULD I COME BACK LATER?
Though you were wrong
I WANTED TO THANK YOU.
.....
ARE YOU TIRED, ACHT?
Heh heh
UH-HUH.
FUWAAH!!
YEAH, NARUNARU WOULDN'T NOTICE IF THE HOUSE CAUGHT FIRE.
WHY WORRY?
HE'S GLUED TO THE KEYBOARD.
I'm in the way
Hey!
BUT...
I'M HERE! PLAY WITH ME!
DO YOU ONLY WANT NARUNARU?
WHAT? YOU WANT TO STUDY NARUNARU?
IT'S NOT THAT.
Oh my!
Ow, ow!
SUCH PASSION!
Like fire!
UH...
Sleeepy
HEY, HEY, SHIN-CHAN?
WILL THE SPARROW BE BACK?
Uh
NARUSAWA-SAN?
WHICH REMINDS ME, NARUSAWA-SAN...
SHE'LL BE FINE.
OH, HER. NO, DR. IKEGAMI FIXED HER UP.

THIS IS AS FAR AS YOU GO.
HUH?
THAT MUST'VE BEEN WHAT HE MEANT.
DID I... TAKE ADVANTAGE OF A SUFFERING BIRD?
Bah!
Uh-oh He's upset
YOU'RE EASY TO READ.
YOU'VE GOT GUILT WRITTEN ALL OVER YOU.
SHINICHIRO
WHY DID YOU VISIT NARUSAWA WITHOUT CHECKING WITH ME?
I RECALLED WHAT HE'D SAID THAT BOTHERED ME SO MUCH.
YOU USED THAT SICK BIRD TO GET MORE "TRAINING."
IT'S A COLD, CRUEL WORLD.
HEH HEH HEH!
poke
IT'S PART OF MY TRAINING!
MAYBE IT'S THE ANIMALS? MAYBE IT'S THE ENIGMAS? I'M CURIOUS!
IT'S LIKE...
Smirk
HMM?
I SEE, I SEE.
YOU'RE NAUGHTY.
?
AH.
OOH, THE LITTLE BIRD! FLUTTERING HELPLESSLY AGAINST MY STEELY CLAWS!
Ha!
Hiss!
Hah!
NO, I DIDN'T --

I COULDN'T ABANDON HER.
YOU KNEW YOU COULD'VE TOLD ME
Yes
BUT STILL...
Cheerleaders!
WHAT?
I HAD TO DO SOME-THING!
I think
IT WASN'T YOUR PET.
Phew
CHEAP-SKATE.
...YOU'RE INVADING THEIR PRIVACY.
WHEN YOU GET INVOLVED WITH OTHER PEOPLE'S PETS...
HEY, SHIN-ICHIRO.
!
ALSO...
YOU NEED TO UNDER-STAND THAT
Y-YEAH...
WHAT WILL YOU DO ABOUT IT NOW?
THE FIRST LINE YOU CROSS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT. EVENTUALLY, YOU'LL FACE SOMETHING WORSE.
UH--
YOU MEAN--
Sigh
SHIN-ICHIRO!
Yes sir...
OH! SO THEN...?
WHAT COULD AN OUTSIDER LIKE YOU DO?
...WHAT IF YOU KNEW THAT SPARROW WAS STRESSED AND TROUBLED?

TRY TAKING CARE OF YOUR OWN DOG FIRST.
Hee
KEEP DREAMING!
THINK I'LL BE LIKE YOU SOME DAY, NARUSAWA-SAN?
...YOU CAN SEE MY FUTURE?
Hee hee
Well? Well?
WHAT'S SO FUNNY, ACHT?
Heh
PFFT!
What sort of treatment is this?
WHAT'S THAT YOU SAY? ALMOST TIME FOR THE MEETING?
IT'S LIKE YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO BREAK INTO LECTURE WHEN YOU TALK, NARUNARU--
Whoa!
SHINICHIRO
KNOW WHAT I MEAN?
I MEAN, CAN YOU BELIEVE HE SAID THAT?!
WAIT A LITTLE--
Happy
TALK ABOUT RUDE!
Unbelievable!
THEN HE ADDS, "THAT SHOULD BE ENOUGH, RIGHT?"
OKAY! YOU CAN EAT.


WHAT DO YOU THINK?
BUT I DID REALLY WANT TO HELP HER.
NARUSAWA-SAN WARNED ME...
...THAT SOME LINES SHOULD NOT BE CROSSED.
HMM?
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
NOW I FEEL GUILTY.
Ah
WHAT IS IT, FLAPPY?
WE ALREADY HAD A WALK.
Hup!
Hmph
STUPID NARUSAWA-SAN.
BESIDES, FLAPPY'S MY FRIEND.
I DON'T THINK OF IT AS "OWNING" HIM.
HER EGG WAS ALL ROUGH.
I REALLY WASN'T NICE TO THAT SPARROW, WAS I?
AM I REALLY THAT DENSE?
Could be
MAYBE I DID JUST USE HER.
THERE'S SO MUCH I DON'T REALIZE UNTIL SOMEONE TELLS ME.

NAH.
HERE. READ IT.
HUH? WHY NOT?
WHY?
WHY...?
I'm amazed that you keep sparrows
YOUR BIRDHOUSE IS KIND OF RICKETY.
SMALL BIRDS ARE VULNERABLE TO STRESS
I think it's this one
YOU HAVE TO PAY EXTRA ATTENTION THEN
IF YOU DON'T WATCH THEM CAREFULLY WHILE THEY'RE LAYING, THEY CAN DIE
...YOU'VE GOT MORE SICK SPARROWS?
How are they?
IS IT SAFE TO SAY THAT...
Right
Pass that to Katou
MORE IMPORTANTLY, DID YOU BRING YOUR ENGLISH HOMEWORK?
MAN, YOU'RE HARSH.
Don't give me that look
Ha ha ha!
MY NUMBER ONE FAVORITE MY NUMBER ONE PRECIOUS DOG!
I KNOW, I KNOW. YOU'RE MY NUMBER ONE!
Grrrr
Heh!
...NARUSAWA-SAN'S WARNING
..I DISREGARDED
BUT EVEN SO..
IT'S TRUE, FLAPPY!
I'M NOT ONLY A NITWIT, BUT NOSY, TOO. TWO FLAWS FOR THE PRICE OF ONE.
...JUST GIVE IT A QUICK READ.
YEAH. I'M SURE YOU'RE ON TOP OF IT, BUT...
"HOW TO RAISE SPARROWS"?
WHAT'S THIS?

THAT'S INCREDIBLE!
"INCREDIBLE"?!
Not the word I'd use.
Huh?
Meow!
Clatter
Play more! More!
Meow!
Meow!
Picture all those little birdies packed into a cage like a can of sardines...
YES, INCREDIBLE!
Huff
What do you expect?
Well, I'm a cat.
AAAACCHTTT...
YOU HAVE TO BE RESPONSIBLE WHEN YOU HAVE PETS!
WHAT DID YOU SAY?!
WHAT'S GOING ON?
A fight?
TCH!
.....
Hmph!
I feel lousy. Guess I'll cut class.
FORGET IT.
Oh?
THE VET FIXED THEM UP JUST FINE.
YOU'VE GOT THE WRONG IDEA.
YOU SHOULD HEAR HOW CONDESCENDING YOU SOUND.
OR ARE YOU JUST PROUD THAT YOU'RE FRIENDS WITH THE VET?
I DIDN'T MEAN TO SOUND CONDE-SCEND--
YEAH? THEN TAKE IT BACK.
BUT--!

HMPH...
He's so strict
COME ON! I GET IT NOW.
OOG...
LIKE THEY SAY, YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW.
SHINICHIRO.
YEAH?
THANKS.
WELCOME HOME!
HE'S BACK!
Shin chan's like a puppy
Sigh
He pushed to stay for dinner
He said I was gross
TOO LATE. HE DID SAY IT.
IF YOU HANG AROUND HERE ALL THE TIME, PEOPLE MIGHT SAY YOU'RE WEIRD.
YEAH, I SEE
HEY, HEY! AT SCHOOL TODAY--
Seems like you live here
HEY, DO YOU MIND GOING HOME FOR DINNER?

NARUSAWA-SAN?
IF YOU TALK WITH ANIMALS...
YOU MAY BECOME LIKE AN ANIMAL. TAKE ON AN ANIMALISTIC PERSPECTIVE. WHETHER IT'S DOGS, CATS, OR EVEN RATS.
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT THAT MEANS?
OH...
IS THIS THE "LINE" YOU TALKED ABOUT BEFORE?
SHAAAA
SOMEDAY, YOU'LL HAVE TO DRAW THAT LINE INSIDE YOURSELF.
WHICH WILL YOU RECOGNIZE AS A VOICE? WHICH WILL YOU DISCARD AS NOISE?
LISTEN.
THE WORLD IS FULL OF LINES. WHEN YOU FIND THE ONES YOU CAN LIVE BY...
..YOU'LL BE HAPPIER THAN YOU CAN EVEN IMAGINE.
BUT YOU...

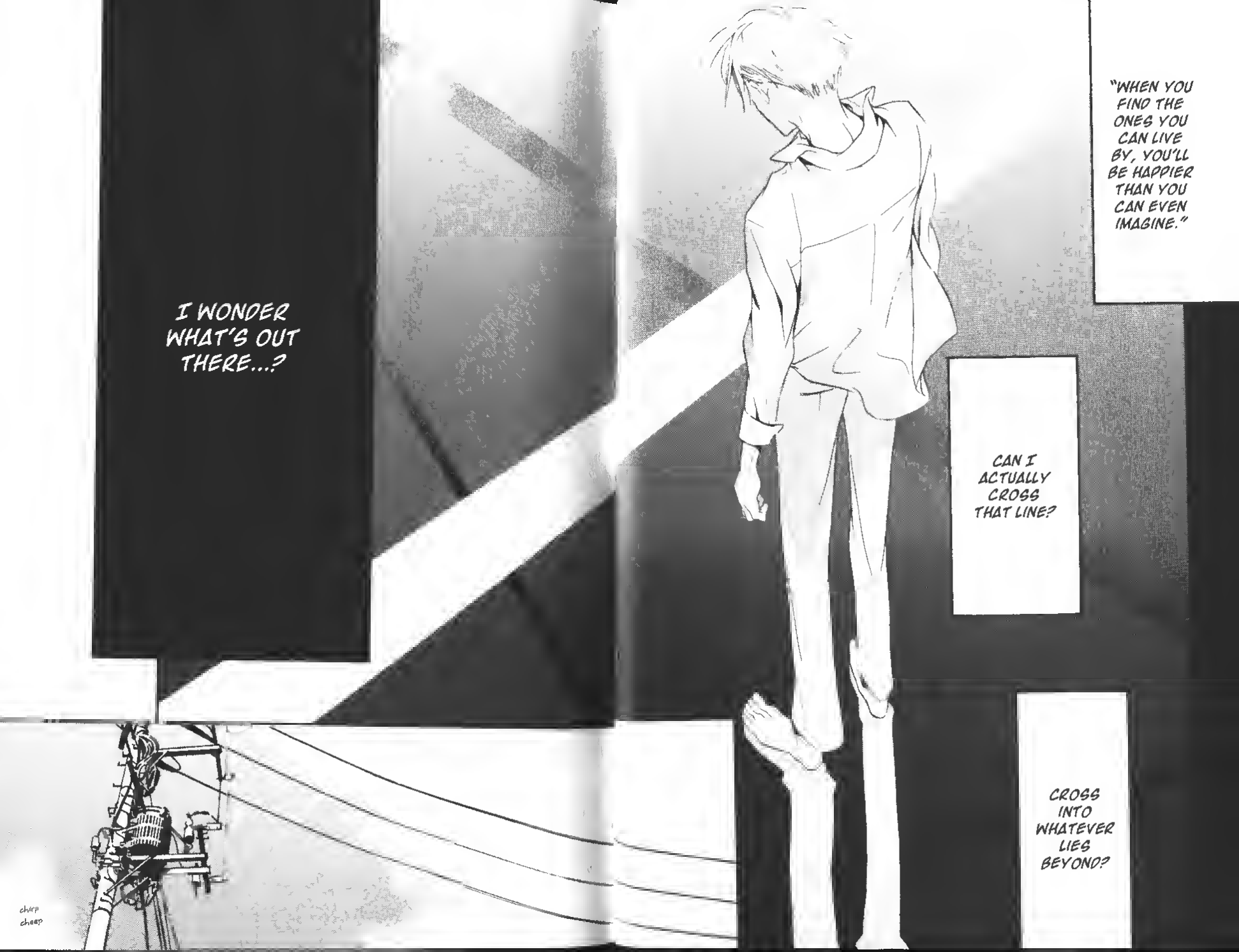
NARUSAWA-SAN?
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO...
...ADMIRE PEOPLE WHO CAN COMMUNICATE WITH ANIMALS?
THAT AGAIN?!
WHAT?
HOW ARE THE SPARROWS?
Arooo!
Arooo!
Arooo!
YOU WANT TO TAKE THEM AWAY FROM ME?
SHEESH!
THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M SAYING.
I'M JUST WORRIED.
WHAT THE HELL IS YOUR PROBLEM?!
tmp

IS THE IDEA OF TWO TEENAGE BOYS FIGHTING OVER A SPARROW SOMETHING TO LAUGH ABOUT?!
Bwa ha ha!
WHAT ARE YOU CACKLING ABOUT?
Heh heh heh!
SORRY, MY BAD
Hic
wheeze wheeze wheeze
.....
Heh heh!
BUT IT'S HILARIOUS HOW SIMPLE KIDS ARE. I'M ENVIOUS.
I GET IT. UH-HUH.
NO, NO.
SOMETIMES IT TAKES A GOOD PUNCHING TO GET PEOPLE TO BE FRIENDS!
NATURAL SELECTION WILL PICK OFF THE WEAK YOU CAN'T STOP IT.
IN THAT KIND OF ENVIRON-MENT...
SERI-OUSLY...
He's cute when he smiles
Grr!
THAT'S ALL THEY'RE GOOD FOR!
WHAT?!
HEY, I KNOW.
THERE'S SO MANY OF THEM, WHY DON'T I PLUCK THEIR FEATHERS TO STUFF A MATTRESS?
EEEEK!
WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?
OW...
HEH!
IT'S A FIGHT!
WATCH OUT!
AT FIRST, I JUST THOUGHT..
...IT WOULD BE SO MUCH FUN TO TALK TO FLAPPY.

Your pajamas are blue and that's Pikachu on the wall
YOU TWIST UP LIKE A PRETZEL WHEN YOU SLEEP, AND YOU WAKE UP...
...HALFWAY OFF THE BED.
NO WAY!
HOW'D YOU KNOW?!
I DIDN'T EVEN TELL DR. IKEGAMI—
SOMETHING ELSE ABOUT YOU...
What?!
WH-WH—
ガシ!
THAT'S A SECRET.
Smooth
What do you mean "secret"?!
HA HA HA HA!
KNOCK IT OFF!
NARUSAWA!

That's enough! I'll do better now!
I swear!
Sh n-chan can be a brute
HE'LL BE A BETTER OWNER NOW. AND I'LL CHECK TO MAKE SURE.
HUH?
OH, NO, THAT'S ALL FIXED
I DIDN'T HEAR IT FROM YOU.
THEN DID ACHT TELL YOU?
I DIDN'T SAY NOTHIN'!
If I did I'd miss a meal
What?
Naru san! Naru san!
Poke
WHO INDEED?
He he he
YOUNG MASTER SHINICHIRO'S ALL, "WHO SPILLED THE BEANS?"
WAIT, DID I TELL YOU...
Uh
...ABOUT THE SPARROWS?
NO.

SHOULD I STAY ON THIS PATH?
HUMANS DRAW LINES, AND LIVE BY THE ONES THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO THEM.
I KNOW I WAS STUPID. I JUST DIDN'T THINK ABOUT IT.
WHAT WOULD NARUSAWA-SAN HAVE DONE?
"IF YOU TALK TO ANIMALS, YOU MAY BECOME LIKE AN ANIMAL. TAKE ON AN ANIMALISTIC PERSPECTIVE."
HE SAID I'LL PROBABLY RUN INTO SOMETHING WORSE ONE DAY.
EVERYTHING IS SO COMPLICATED, AND ALL I FEEL IS INSECURE
Heh heh heh
IT WAS A JOKE.
BOY, YOU'VE GOT A LOW BOILING POINT.
!
HEY, SHINICHIRO?
GIMME A BREAK! I GET THE POINT
ARE YOU GOING TO BEAT UP EVERY SUB-STANDARD DOG OWNER?
AFTER THIS
I WON'T DO IT AGAIN.


I WONDER WHAT'S OUT THERE...?
"WHEN YOU FIND THE ONES YOU CAN LIVE BY, YOU'LL BE HAPPIER THAN YOU CAN EVEN IMAGINE."
CAN I ACTUALLY CROSS THAT LINE?
CROSS INTO WHATEVER LIES BEYOND?
chirp
cheep

I CAN FEEL THEM WATCHING ME.
IF I LOOK CLOSELY...
...ANIMALS ARE ALWAYS LIVING ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF OUR LIVES.
NO, THEY'RE NOT REALLY ON THE OUTSKIRTS.
IT'S JUST THAT HUMANS...
...DON'T BOTHER TO NOTICE THEM.
BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN THEY DON'T EXIST.
WAIT A SECOND
IS THIS WHY NARUSAWA-SAN KNOWS ABOUT ME?
Does he have animal spies?
THE JERK!
HE ACCUSED ME OF INVADING PEOPLE'S PRIVACY, BUT HE DOES IT TOO!

RING
NARUSAWA-SAN!
IT'S ALL RIGHT.
YEAH, I CAN HEAR YOU
WAS THAT SHINICHIRO?
YEAH.
IT'S OKAY. YOU'RE IMAGINING THINGS.
OKAY.
HE MIGHT HAVE THE GIFT, AFTER ALL.
HE'S ENTERED THE SECOND STAGE
HE'S BECOMING AWARE OF ANIMALS
LATER.

twitch
Woof
Woof
Woof
IT'S JUST MY IMAGINATION. IT'S ALL IN MY HEAD.
NOTHING'S THERE.
SOMETHING'S WRONG! I'M SCARED!
WHAT...?
squeeze

Huff
Huff
THAT WAS SNEAKY!
Heh
NARU-SAWA.
YOU WANT A COMRADE NOW, DON'T YOU?
DON'T TELL IKEGAMI.
HMPH.
Why would I tell him? I can't talk to him anyway
WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?
YOU'VE BEEN SO WEIRD LATELY.
.....
ACHT.
GET THE BALL! GET IT!
Hey!
...DIDN'T YOU SAY THE OPPOSITE BEFORE?
YOU ACT LIKE YOU WANT HIM TO BE INVOLVED, BUT...
YOU SAID IT'D BE A HASSLE. IT'S TOTALLY STRANGE.

!
IT'S OKAY. IT'S JUST YOUR IMAGINATION
IT'S NOTHING
!
.....
.....
IT'S OKAY.

OH MY.
YOU ARE A CRUEL MAN.
!
RIGHT, MY HOME-WORK!
I THOUGHT MY MATH BOOK WAS..
カタカタ
カタカタカタ
.....
Uh-

Voice or Noise
call 03
THAT DAY WAS THE FIRST TIME...
...THAT NARUSAWA-SAN SCARED ME.
call »02 END

AND THEN...
THIRD PERIOD P.E.
Ack...a crow!
WALKING TO SCHOOL
Yo!
CHANGING
FIRST PERIOD MATH
AFTER SCHOOL
Ah.
I'M WORN OUT.
IT'S DRIVING ME CRAZY I HAVE TO TALK TO NARUSAWA-SAN.
WHERE DO I GO TO REPORT BEING STALKED BY A CROW?

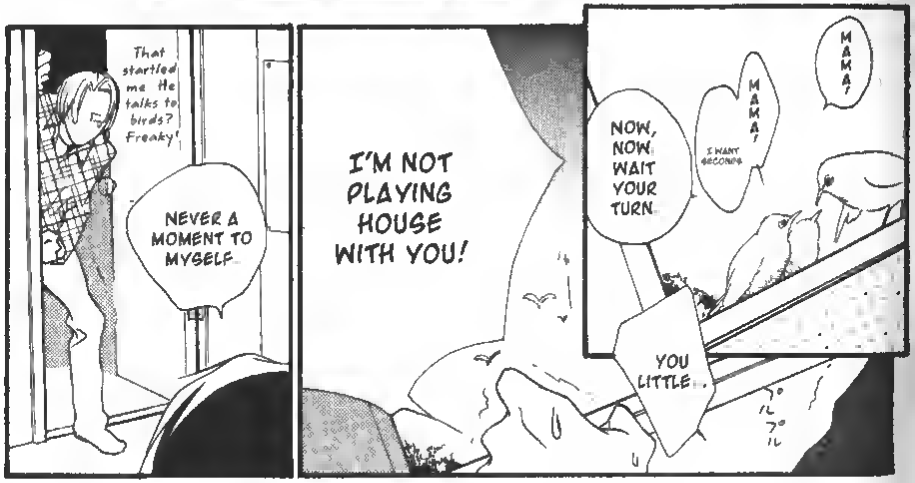
.....
GET LOST!
YOU BIRDBRAIN! I'VE HAD IT!
WHY
YOU
.....
Go away!!
Gaaah.
tak tak
Kaaw
I YELLED AT THE TOP OF MY LUNGS, BUT THE CROW WOULDN'T MOVE.

TALKING TO ANIMALS IS LIKE SOMETHING FROM A FAIRY TALE.
BUT THIS IS REALITY.
AND NOBODY KNOWS IF THE PROTAGONIST IS A HERO OR A VILLAIN.
HE'S ALMOST TWICE MY AGE, AND A COLLEGE PROFESSOR
IF I DON'T GO OUT OF MY WAY TO DROP BY, WE NEVER SEE EACH OTHER
I'M STILL IN JUNIOR HIGH. WHAT COULD WE HAVE IN COMMON? HE'S A MYSTERIOUS ADULT.
I SHOULD ASK HIM...
Whew
THIS ISN'T JUST MY IMAGINATION! I'M POSITIVE!
Stare
Bwa ha ha!
IT'S YOUR IMAGINATION!
BUT HE DIDN'T BELIEVE ME THE FIRST TIME.
"...ABOUT THE SPARROWS?"
"DID I TELL YOU..."
"...AND YOU WAKE UP HALFWAY OFF THE BED."
"YOU TWIST UP LIKE A PRETZEL WHEN YOU SLEEP..."
"HOW..."
...ABOUT THIS SORT OF THING...
...BUT I WAS AFRAID.
"HOW DID YOU KNOW?!"
SO AFTER THAT, I STOPPED VISITING HIM.

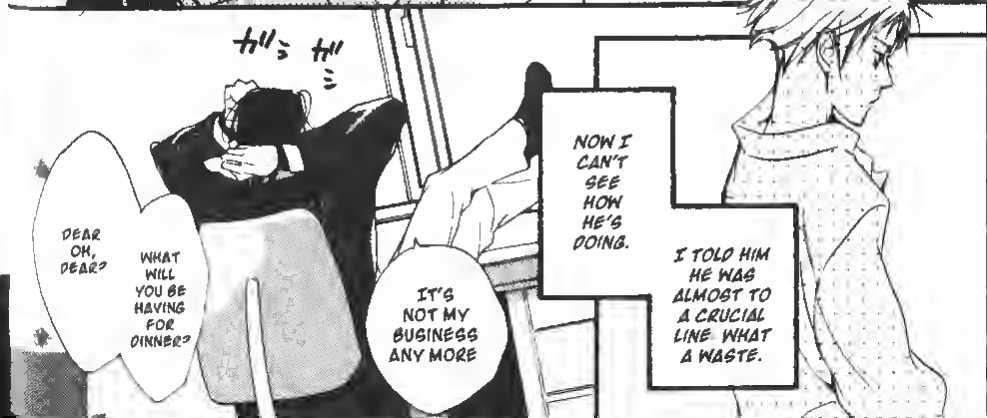
NO, NO, NO.
NARUSAWA-SAN KEEPING SURVEILLANCE ON ME?
WHAT AM I THINKING? RIDICULOUS! STOP THAT, SELF!
Right!
IT HAS TO BE MY IMAGINATION! YES!
EEEE!
LISTEN TO THAT! HE'S SO BRAVE. OOH, HE'S ADORABLE!
HE'S BEEN KEEPING UP SUCH A GOOD FRONT.
I WONDER IF HE WAS BLUFFING ALL ALONG THAT CUTIE!
AND HIS CHEEKS LOOK SO SCRUMPTIOUS!
DON'T YOU JUST WANT TO GOBBLE HIM UP?
I'M NOT INTO CANNIBALISM
No.
What a shame!
コーケン
YOU BET I AM!
I GUESS
YOU'RE HAVING FUN.
BUT REALLY!
HUMAN CHILDREN ARE SO QUIRKY
It's a fad.
WONDER IF HE HAS INSOMNIA?
Nod
CHOCOLATE BEFORE BED? NAUGHTY, NAUGHTY!
HE SHOULD LEARN TO GET TO SLEEP EARLIER
HE NODS OFF IN CLASS, BUT HE KEEPS TRYING TO STUDY.
進学塾

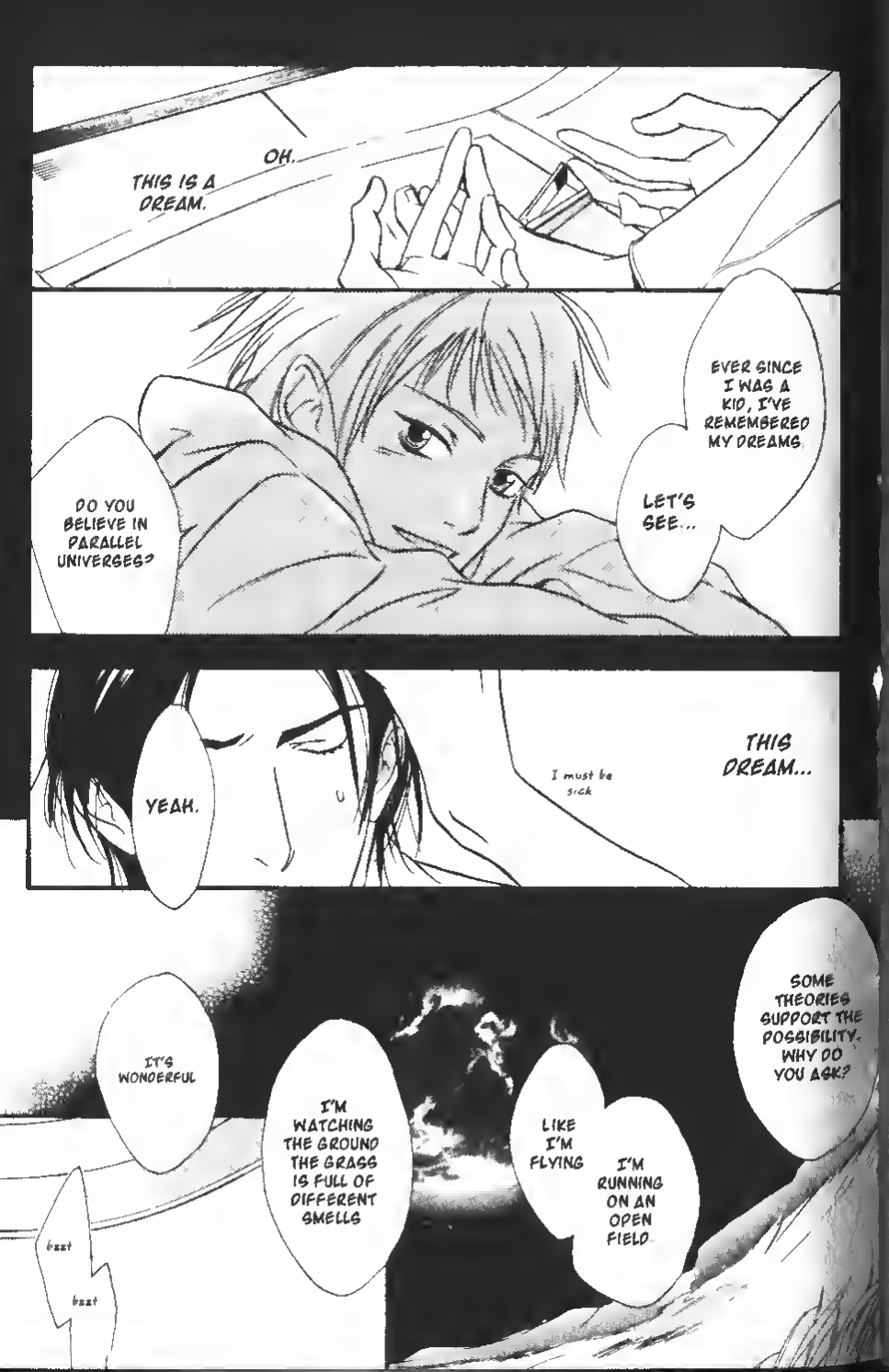
HUH? WHAT?
What's up?
HUH? WHERE'S NARUSAWA-SAN?
CHECK THE PRINTER IT ALWAYS FREEZES WHEN PAPERS ARE DUE
WAIT A SEC.
HOW FAR DID YOU GET?
I'M MORE AFRAID OF A POWER FAILURE!
Crud! It's gone!
WHAT'S ON THE DEDICATION PAGE?
Idiot! That's the "acknowledgements."
THE PROFESSOR?
HE'S NEXT DOOR, TALKING TO HONDA
OKAY.
Why even attend college?! Nitwits! Noodleheads! Learn your mechanics!
You idiots are going for your masters, and you don't get path integrals?!
LOOK OUT. NOW IT'S "NARUSAWA-SAMA."
Whisper
IT'S ENOUGH TO MAKE YOU WEEP UNTIL YOU'RE DRY.
You should see him in class
HE'S THE "SADIST" SIDE OF SEM, MINUS THE WHIP BUT IT'S STILL PLENTY BAD.
"NARUSAWA-SAMA" MEANS HE'S IN DEMON-MODE
RIGHT, YOU USUALLY FLAKE ON CLASSES, SO YOU DON'T KNOW
SAY WHAT?
Ahh...
YAWN...
NOW'S THE TIME FOR ANOTHER NUDGE.
I CAN'T GET THE FILE OPEN!
HUH?! WHAT DO YOU MEAN?!
IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, I'D TAKE YOU FOR A STALKER.
You talk like one
BUT YOU ASKED ME TO SPY ON HIM AND REPORT EVERY MOVE HE MADE!
I KNOW WHAT A STALKER IS!
They're another fad.
INSOMNIA, HUH?

Hmm..
SHINICHIRO STOPPED COMING.
DAMN!
Waaah!
There there
Bwa ha ha! That's cold! That's from your adviser no less!
HE ASKED IF I'D REPEAT A YEAR, OR QUIT AND FLIP BURGERS
HE REFUSED TO WRITE MY LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION!
I'M BACK
HONDA, HOW'D IT GO?
They're wearing me down
I see why you're upset
HE HASN'T BEEN AROUND MUCH, SO WHAT'S UP?
YEAH. IT WAS SO PEACEFUL.
CRUD. I NEEDED TO DISCUSS MY FINAL PAPER.
If you don't want to learn, don't bother showing up!
Haw haw haw haw!
That must be it!
...HIS GIRLFRIEND DUMPED HIM!
OR MAYBE
MAYBE SOMEONE STOOD UP TO HIM.
He imprinted on me like an idiot baby bird
WHY?
Morning!
MAKE ME YOUR PUPIL!
Narusawa-san!
I could eat with the students maybe
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT TO MAKE FOR DINNER.
HEY, YOU LOT! WANT TO GO EAT?
We humbly decline, sir!
HMPH
Fine then
Poor guy



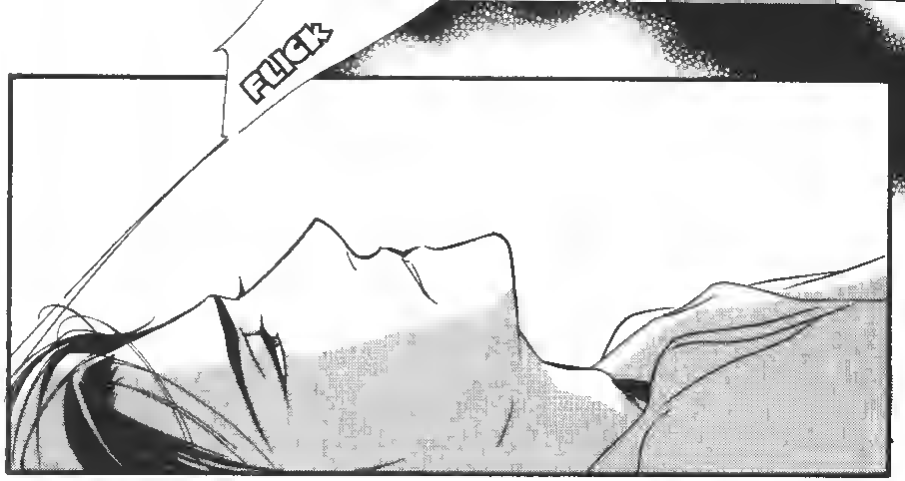

And thus, more legends are born

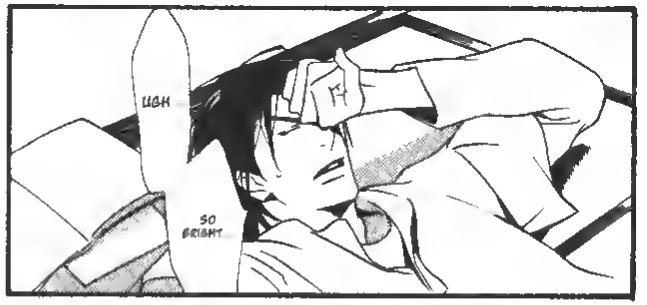

DEAR OH, DEAR?
WHAT WILL YOU BE HAVING FOR DINNER?
IT'S NOT MY BUSINESS ANY MORE
NOW I CAN'T SEE HOW HE'S DOING.
I TOLD HIM HE WAS ALMOST TO A CRUCIAL LINE. WHAT A WASTE.


OH.
THIS IS A DREAM.
EVER SINCE I WAS A KID, I'VE REMEMBERED MY DREAMS.
LET'S SEE...
DO YOU BELIEVE IN PARALLEL UNIVERSES?
YEAH.
I must be sick
THIS DREAM...
SOME THEORIES SUPPORT THE POSSIBILITY. WHY DO YOU ASK?
I'M RUNNING ON AN OPEN FIELD
LIKE I'M FLYING
I'M WATCHING THE GROUND THE GRASS IS FULL OF DIFFERENT SMELLS
IT'S WONDERFUL
bzzt
bzzt

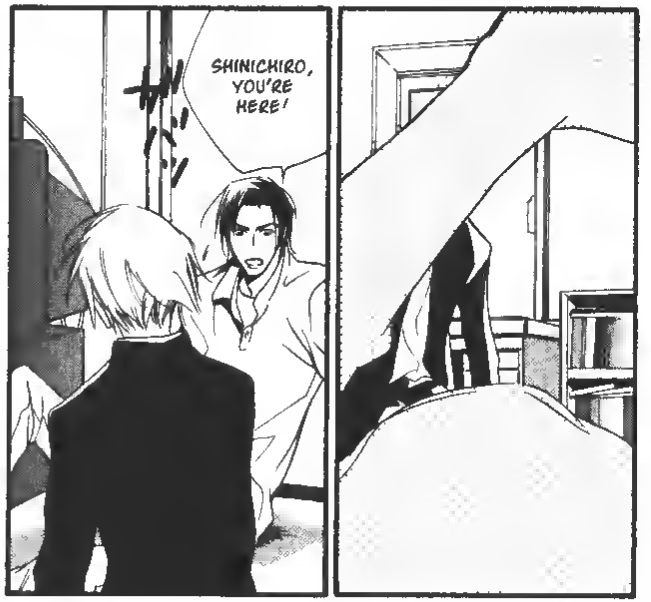
NARUSAWA-SAN, DO YOU HATE ANIMALS?
Hmm...
I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU TALKING WITH OTHER ANIMALS.
WHY DON'T YOU? IT SEEMS LIKE A WASTE
DO YOU GO UP TO RANDOM STRANGERS ON THE STREET
AND STRIKE UP CONVERSATIONS WITH THEM?
No fair
BOO!!
Heh heh heh
HEY
IT'S A WASTE OF A PRECIOUS GIFT!
JUST SOME
I wish
IF YOU DON'T USE IT, CAN I HAVE IT?
flick

UM...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU THINK, BUT...
...I CAN'T KEEP DOING THIS WITH YOU ANY MORE.
WHAT--?
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I'M SCARED.
ALTHOUGH I DON'T KNOW WHY.



NARUSAWA-SAN

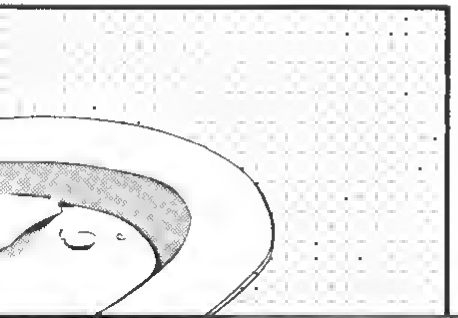


WHO IS THIS?
SEE?
THIS IS WHAT YOU ARE GUARDING SO CAREFULLY? THIS LITTLE, MEANINGLESS THING?
WHAT IS THIS?
YOU PROTECT YOURSELF BY PRETENDING EVERYONE ELSE IS STUPID.
NOW YOU'RE SAYING IT?
OR WAS IT MY THERAPIST?
I THINK IT WAS MY MOM?
SOMEONE SAID THIS BEFORE.
YOU MUST BE UPSET
...THAT I BARGED INTO YOUR LIFE.
IN THE END...
...THERE'LL BE NOTHING LEFT OF YOU BUT A HARD SHELL.
YOU DON'T LIKE LETTING ANYONE IN
IT'S EASIER FOR YOU TO KEEP EVERYTHING INSIDE

THE DARKNESS SPREAD. IT WAS AS IF THE WORLD HAD TURNED INSIDE OUT.

ALL I COULD HEAR WAS NOISE.

NOT A SINGLE VOICE.



#7
HEY.
YOU HAVEN'T COME OVER LATELY.
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
HEY.
WHY?
I'VE GOT EXAMS, AND I NEED TO STUDY.
HOW DID YOU KNOW WHERE I LIVED?
I SAW OLD FLAPPY BOY, SO I KNEW THIS WAS THE PLACE
I HAPPENED TO BE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD
SCHOOLWORK?
NARUNARU COULD TUTOR YOU
ERK
SO WHY DON'T YOU VISIT ANYMORE?
I'VE NEVER KNOWN A CAT TO HAVE SUCH A BIG TERRITORY.
ACHT...
HA HA!
I DON'T BELIEVE THAT "IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD..."
SHIN-CHAN?
I GUESS, BUT..
ACHT!
STOP!
BUT...
..YOU'RE DIFFERENT, SHINICHIRO
HUH?
HE SAYS YOU'RE SPECIAL.

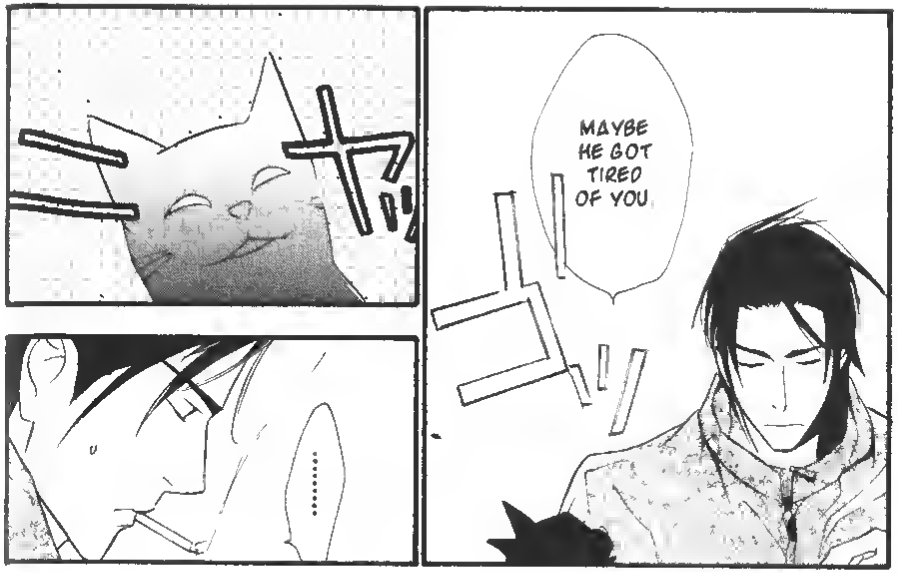
ONCE YOU START DOUBTING YOUR CHOICES, THERE'S NO END TO IT.
ACHT'S CLOSER TO NARUSAWA-SAN THAN I AM. .. RIGHT?
I'VE BEEN LONELY WITHOUT YOU.
I WAS COMFORTABLE IN HIS HOME, BUT THAT DOESN'T PROVE ANYTHING.
...ABOUT HIM.
I DON'T REALLY KNOW ANYTHING...
NARUSAWA-SAN SEEMS NICE, BUT HE'S SUCH AN ENIGMA.
IT WAS AS IF HIS OWN HOUSE WASN'T EVEN HIS TERRITORY. THE MOMENT WE MET, HE HANDED IT OVER TO ME.
Hmm.
SOMEHOW, I DON'T FEEL COMFORTED
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
Oh!
YOU REALLY ARE DOWN.
HOW?
HMM..
Ha
WELL, YOU CAN TALK TO ME. MOST PEOPLE CAN'T.
THAT'S SPECIAL
YOU'RE ONE OF THE CHOSEN FEW!
SERIOUSLY, SHIN-CHAN.
.....

THAT'S WHAT SCARES ME.
SORRY, ACHT.
HEY. LONG TIME NO SEE.
THIS IS UNUSUAL.
YEAH
NO HARM IN DRINKING WITH YOU OCCASIONALLY?
OCCASIONALLY?
NOTHING LET'S DITCH THE MUTT...
AND GET A DRINK.
I DIDN'T SAY I'D COME WITH YOU
HE SAYS THERE'RE PRETTY WOMEN
ONE OF MY STUDENTS WORKS THERE
I'M GOING!
.....
HUH? WHAT?
HUH. SAME WITH HIM.
Phew
A PATIENT?
AND WHO'S THIS LITTLE CUTIE?
YEAH, I'M LOOKING AFTER HIM

HEY, ABOUT IKEGAMI --
SHUT UP.
Booo!
OOF!
ISN'T IT DANGEROUS TO CLIMB BY YOURSELF?
AH-AH-AH! YOU'RE A MESS
YOU SHOULD CALL UP IKEGAMI. HE'S OFF WORK ON SUNDAYS, RIGHT?
SHINICHIRO ISN'T COMING, HUH?

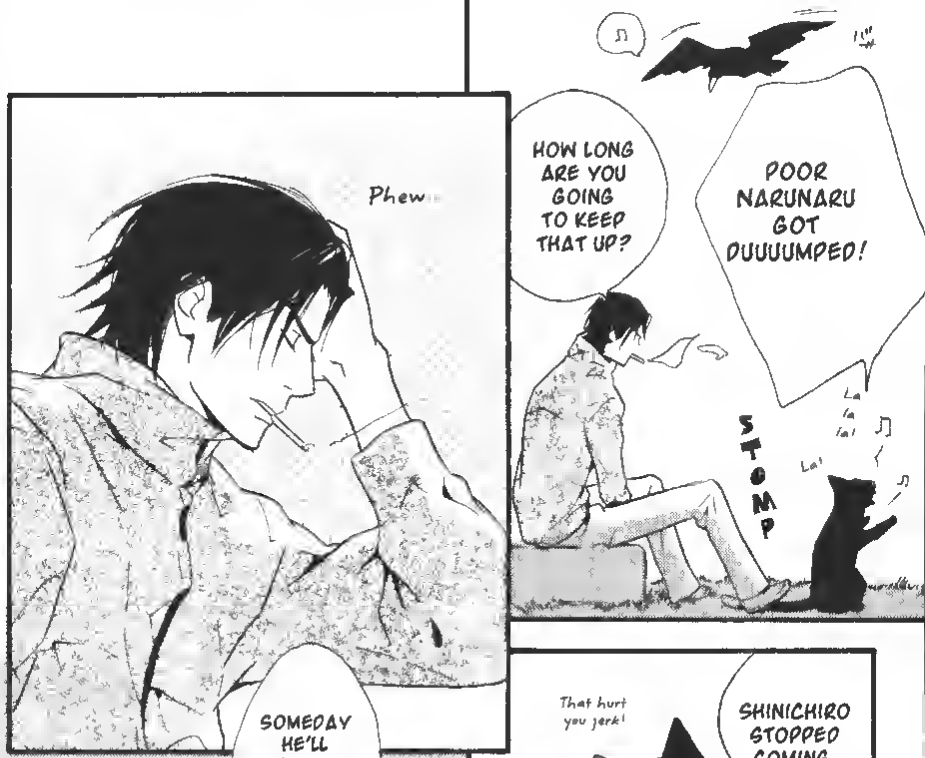
HMPH.
Bleh
Clink!
SO WHAT NEXT? YOU UP FOR A STRIP CLUB?
I'VE KNOWN YOU FOR YEARS
WHERE'D YOU GET THAT IDEA?
WHAT'S THE MATTER? ARE YOU MAD AT A STUDENT?
I DON'T NEED YOUR NAGGING.
Hmm?

HOW LONG DO YOU PLAN ON BEING CELIBATE?
WHAT'S UP WITH YOU? ARE YOU STILL LIVING LIKE A HERMIT? YOU'RE NO FUN.
THAT'S WHY YOU'RE AT THE MERCY OF THAT KID.
Nudge nudge
CHILL.
WHO'S AT THE MERCY OF HIM?!
Huh?

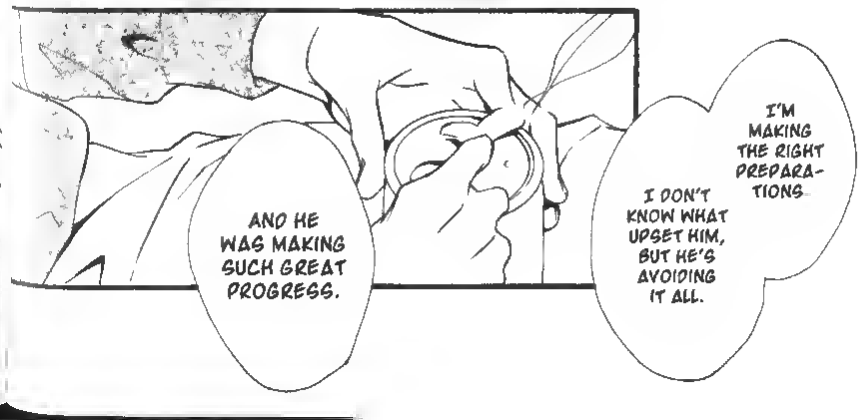

MAYBE HE GOT TIRED OF YOU

I DRANK TOO MUCH LAST NIGHT.
THAT'S ENOUGH. YOU'RE DRINKING TOO FAST.
SO PATHETIC, SO SAD!
POOR, POOR NARU-NARU!
POOR NARUNARU! SOMEBODY GOT BORED WITH HIM!
Whee!
AM NOT!
YOU'VE GOT TO EAT, TOO
STOP KNOCKING THEM BACK LIKE THAT
GOD, MY HEAD IS KILLING ME

YOU REALLY CARE ABOUT THAT KID.
HE'S IMPORTANT TO YOU.
HAVE A LITTLE INSIGHT, WOULD YOU?
BECAUSE SOME-DAY...
...HE'LL BE THE ONLY ONE WHO UNDERSTANDS YOU.
NARU-SAWA.
YOU HAVEN'T REALIZED?
JESUS CHRIST...LET ME SPELL THIS OUT FOR YOU.
WHAT?
NO...?
What are you implying?
You're drunk
DOES ANYONE OTHER THAN ME AND THE KID KNOW ABOUT YOUR GIFT?
WHAT?
THIS ISN'T LIKE YOU.


Phew...
HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO KEEP THAT UP?
POOR NARUNARU GOT DUUUUMPED!
STOMP
SOMEDAY HE'LL COME, WHETHER HE LIKES IT OR NOT.
That hurt you jerk!
Jeez!
SHINICHIRO STOPPED COMING.

MY HEAD WEIGHS A TON.



YOU WANTED TO TALK TO ANIMALS.
THIS IS WHAT YOU ASKED FOR.
WHAT?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND ANY OF IT!
WHAT PREPARATIONS ARE YOU MAKING?!
AND WHAT WAS UP WITH THAT CROW?!
WHEN DID IT GET LIKE THIS?
I'M JUST SURPRISED
HEY, WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO Y--
YOU HAVE THE ABILITY...
...BUT YOU NEED TO BE READY TO FULLY ACCEPT IT.
WHY?
YOU'RE SECRETLY TRYING TO CONTROL ME
I DON'T UNDERSTAND ANYMORE
I DON'T GET IT! I NEVER HEARD ANY OF THIS!

HEY!
WAIT!
SHIN-ICHIRO!
LET GO OF ME!
WHAT DID YOU MEAN, "PROGRESS"?

...IS A CHILD LIKE THIS?
squeeze
SHINICHIRO
I'M...
I'M NOT YOUR LAB RAT!!
!
ARE YOU ANGRY?
NO, BUT I'M DISAPPOINTED!
ALL THOSE WARNINGS THAT I WOULD REGRET IT WERE JUST "PREPARATION"?!
NOT BECAUSE YOU WERE ACTUALLY CONCERNED ABOUT ME?!
SO..
THAT WAS ALSO.
WHAT AM I?!
EXACTLY WHAT AM I TO YOU?!
THE ONLY ONE WHO WILL UNDERSTAND ME...

call »03 END

## Acht

KAW!
NOW GO!
I TOLD YOU TO FOLLOW HIM.
C'MON, GO AFTER HIM.
HUH?
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO FOLLOW HIM YOURSELF?
LISTEN.
IT'S COMPLETELY DIFFERENT-- A TYPE OF FREEDOM.
THIS ISN'T ONE OF THOSE CALCULATIONS YOU RUN IN THAT FUNNY BOX
UNDER-STAND?
THIS IS REALITY.
REAL TIME IS RUNNING OUT.
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT YOU TOO ARE A VARIABLE?
THERE IS NO BOUNDARY CONDITION.

HE SAID "LAB RAT."
"I'M NOT YOUR LAB RAT!"
"WHAT AM I TO YOU?!"
HE SURE CAUGHT ON FAST.
HE'S PRETTY SMART FOR BEING SUCH A CUTIE.
YOU'RE IN FOR IT NOW, NARUNARU.

I KNOW.
I'M NOT SO SURE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING.
I WONDER...
I'LL SAY YOU'RE SORRY.
SHINICHIRO'S A GOOD KID I FEEL SORRY FOR HIM.
HUH?
HE'LL COME BACK EVENTU-ALLY
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THAT?
WHAT-EVER! JUST SHUT UP. SHUT UP.
HE'LL BE BACK
NARU-SAWA, ARE YOU LISTENING ?!
WHAT DOES SHINICHIRO WANT TO KNOW?
DO YOU EVEN KNOW YOURSELF?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND ANY OF IT!
I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN TEACH HIM.
TEACH HIM WHAT?
HAH.
WHAT HE WANTS TO KNOW.

IT'S SO BORING WITHOUT THEM.
NARUNARU AND SHIN-CHAN ARE SO MEAN.
THEY'VE FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT ME.
I WISH THEY'D GO BACK TO BEING FRIENDS.

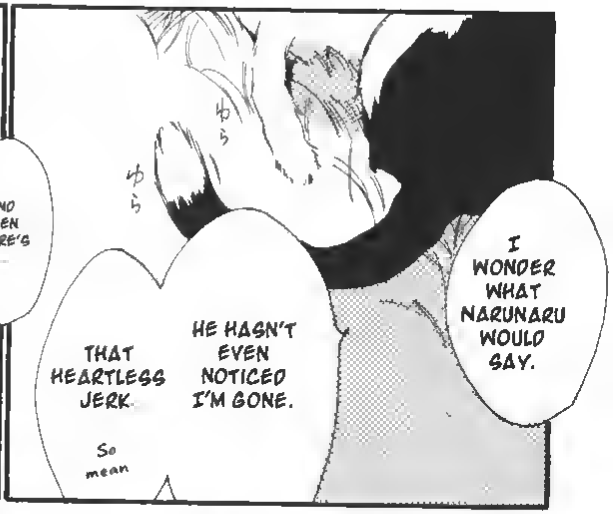
AAAAAAH!

I MISS THE THREE OF US EATING TOGETHER.
IT'S DELICIOUS! I HAD IT ONCE WITH SHIN-CHAN.
Oh, and the rice is awesome!
It's chewy
HEY, DO YOU KNOW WHAT KAMAMOKO IS?
I WONDER IF NARUNARU WOULD LIKE IT.
HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO MOVE IN WITH SHIN-CHAN?

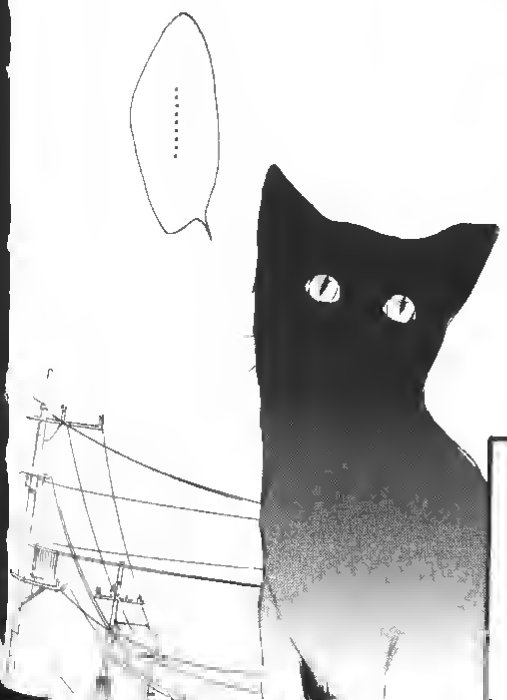
EO! BOR! VERY! SO!
Lick
Lick
mew
AW... TRYING TO CHEER ME UP?
I'M BORED, BORED, BOOOORED!
TCH.

GUESS I'D BETTER GO HOME, TOO.
YIKES.
THERE'S LOTS OF CROWS TODAY.
Sigh
SHINICHIRO?
RIGHT?
I HATE CROWS!
OH. OKAY, THEN.
YOU'VE BEEN IN A BAD MOOD LATELY.
IT'S NOTHING!

AND THEN THERE'S


I WONDER WHAT NARUNARU WOULD SAY.
HE HASN'T EVEN NOTICED I'M GONE.
THAT HEARTLESS JERK
So mean

HEY!
mew!


.....

mew!

ACHT?
IS THIS A BAD SIGN FOR MY EXAMS?
WHAT NOW? THE CROWS THROW A PARTY, THEN A BLACK CAT CUTS ME OFF!
Kaaw
Kaaw
Kaaw
THEY REALLY ARE NOISY.
.....
ARE YOU OKAY?
YOU SURE?
YOU SEEM LIKE YOU'RE IN A FUNK ABOUT SOMETHING.
OKAY, OKAY
IT'S NOTHING LIKE THAT.
GIRL TROUBLE? GRADUATION ANXIETY?
WE'RE IN THE MIDST OF PUBERTY, AFTER ALL.
COULDN'T BE
THAT REMINDS ME, I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM FOR A WHILE.
WONDER IF THEY SPOTTED A CORPSE.
NO...
Let's see
to
Ring ring
I HOPE ACHT'S ALL RIGHT.
Oh, a text message
WHOA!
So like
HE'S RIGHT. I AM WORRIED.
FOR NOW, I
I DON'T WANT TO THINK ABOUT IT, SO I WON'T.
SINCE THE LAST TIME I SAW HIM

YOU GOT HERE FAST!
Ha ha ha!
へたっ
HE'S ALIVE!
WHAT A RELIEF!
OH NO.
……
Ugh
I NEARLY HAD A HEART ATTACK!
DON'T WORRY, IT WAS A MINOR INJURY. LOOKS LIKE HE WAS HIT BY A BICYCLE.
HE JUST HAS A FEW LACERATIONS WE DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TO X-RAY
REALLY?
Phew!
OH.
I RAN ALL THE WAY HERE!
THE CAUSE OF MY GLOOMY MOOD.
HE'S HERE, TOO
SORRY ABOUT THAT. I JUST THOUGHT YOU SHOULD KNOW.
Grr
I DIDN'T MEAN TO DRAG YOU HERE.

Ikegami
...ACCIDENT?!
Acht was in an accident. He's at Ikegami Hospital. Details later. Narusawa
ACHT...
ACHT!
Clack
UH

OOPS, I REALLY PUT MY FOOT IN IT AGAIN.
ふぃっ
WHATEVER! I DIDN'T COME BECAUSE YOU CALLED ME.
I WAS WORRIED ABOUT ACHT.
UNLIKE YOU, NARUSAWA-SAN!
NOW WHAT?
LET ME GUESS
DID YOU DO THIS ON PURPOSE, ACHT?
YOU WON'T SAY?
THIS IS AWKWARD.
.....
HA!
ピク
ぺろ
ぺろ
HEY!
I SHOULDN'T HAVE SAID THAT WHEN YOU'RE HURT
I'M SORRY.
RIGHT?
I WAS JUST SO RELIEVED... UH, I'M SORRY I ACTED WEIRD.
ARE YOU MAD AT ME?
UH....
ACHT?

INSIDE THE ROOM...
MRAAAW.
...ACHT'S VOICE ECHOED FOR A LONG TIME, THEN IT FADED AWAY.
SO THAT'S WHAT A CAT'S CRY SOUNDS LIKE.
MAAU.
MREEEEW.
ACHT?!
MYAA?
UNDER-STAND HIM EITHER?
WHAT?
YOU CAN'T...
WHAT'S WRONG?
WHY ARE YOU TALKING LIKE A CAT?

"HE'S NOT MY CAT."
WHEN I TOLD NARUSAWA THE SAME THING, HE SAID
WHOA!
WHAT WAS THAT?!
Have you grown?
Pft! Huh!
MAN, OH MAN! IT'S FUN TO SEE SOMEONE BE SO EARNEST.
Huff
Snuggle Snuggle
WHY WOULD HE SAY THAT?
Purr purr
DO YOU THINK...
...HE'S A BAD PERSON?
HE WON'T EVEN TALK TO NARUSAWA-SAN.
BUT THEN, WHAT HAPPENED?
IT CAN'T BE A LOOK-ALIKE.
I'M SURE IT'S ACHT.
I'M NOT SURE.
A BAD PERSON?
Ha ha ha ha!
LET'S JUST SAY THAT I'M IMPRESSED THAT YOU'VE MANAGED TO STAY FRIENDS.
COME BY AGAIN IF THERE'S ANY CHANGE
YES, SIR.
THIS COULD BE A SYMPTOM OF THAT
But I'm not sure
THE SHOCK OF THE ACCIDENT COULD HAVE CAUSED AMNESIA

...I DON'T KNOW WHAT I THINK ABOUT HIM.
LATELY...
SHIN-ICHIRO.
ARE YOU GOING HOME?
I'LL STAY WITH HIM ALL NIGHT!
I'M TOO WORRIED.
I SEE.
SO THEN...
WELL, WOULD YOU LIKE TO COME TO MY HOUSE?
WHY DID HE SMILE LIKE THAT?
AM I THE ONLY ONE WHO'S UPSET, AND UNCERTAIN, AND WORRIED SICK?
Hmph
THAT TICKS ME OFF.
THE WAY HE IS NOW...
...HE SEEMS LIKE AN ORDINARY CAT, HUH?
MOST CATS ARE TACITURN.
BUT THIS GUY COULD TALK ANYONE UNDER THE TABLE.
MAYBE IT'S BETTER FOR HIM TO BE QUIET.
THAT MIGHT HELP HIM RECOVER.
OR IKEGAMI SAID
OH?
NARUSAWA-SAN

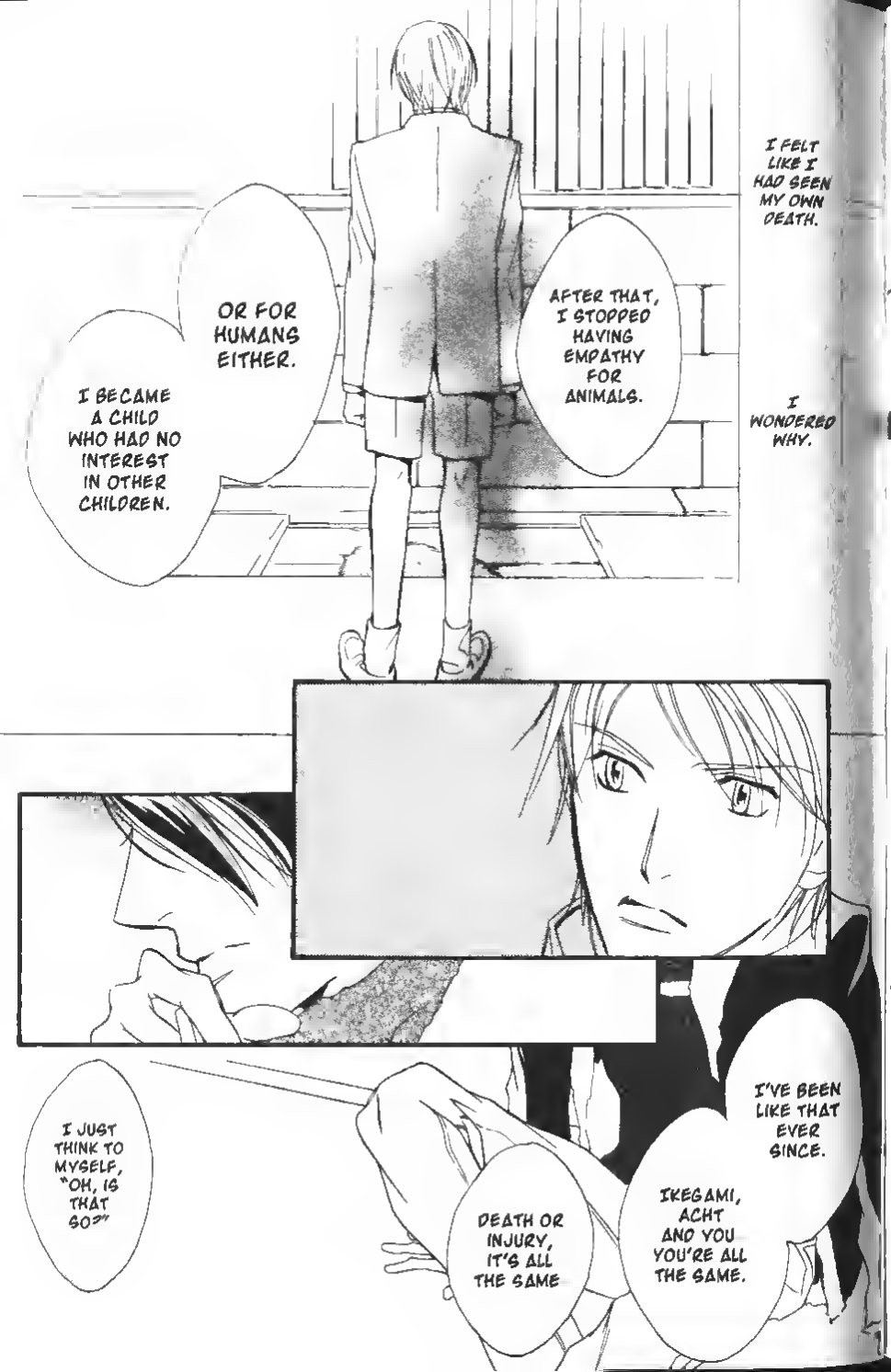
ACHT CAN'T TALK TO OTHER CATS.
MREW
HE COULD ONLY TALK TO YOU AND ME.
WHEN HE TOLD ME THAT...
A CAT-INTELLECTUAL LIKE ME NEEDS SOME SORT OF FLAW. MAKES ME CUTER!
WELL, PROBABLY THEY'RE NOT THAT INTERESTING ANYWAY
I CAN'T UNDERSTAND THOSE OTHER GUYS.
SEE...

THAT'S RIGHT.
I WASN'T THE ONLY ONE.
THEN YOU MUST NOT KNOW.
HAVE YOU EVER SEEN ACHT..
...TALKING TO OTHER CATS?
OTHER CATS?
NO.

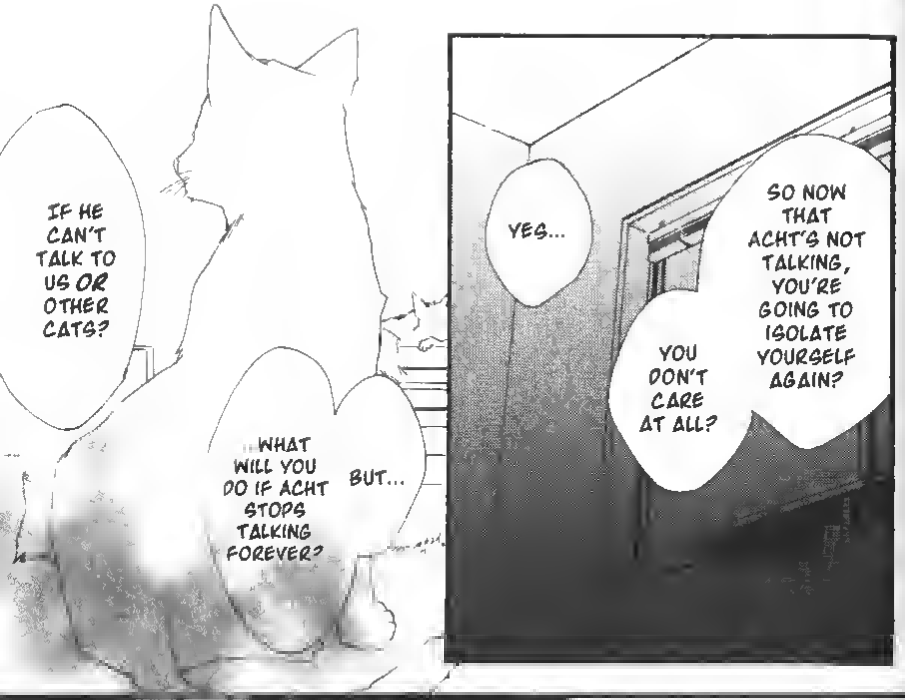
PHEW.
IT'S GETTING COLD.
CHUG CHUG CHUG CHUG
BZZT

DID YOU KNOW ANY OF THAT?
NARUSAWA-SAN
...I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.
ACHT ALWAYS TALKED TOUGH, BUT...
...HE WAS SO LONELY.

I WAS PROUD OF MY FRIENDS MAYBE A BIT TOO PROUD.
I HEARD THINGS NO ONE ELSE COULD HEAR, BUT IT MADE ME ISOLATED.
MY ONLY FRIENDS
..WERE THE NEIGHBORHOOD CATS AND DOGS.
THEY WERE FRIENDS ONLY I COULD HAVE.
BUT MY ARRO-GANCE...
. WAS A THIN VEIL OVER THE PAIN I FELT ABOUT BEING AN OUTCAST
I ONLY REALIZED THAT..
...DURING THE FUNERAL OF A CLASSMATE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.
HOW DREADFUL!
Huuu...
WHEN I WAS A KID...


I FELT LIKE I HAD SEEN MY OWN DEATH.
I WONDERED WHY.
AFTER THAT, I STOPPED HAVING EMPATHY FOR ANIMALS.
OR FOR HUMANS EITHER.
I BECAME A CHILD WHO HAD NO INTEREST IN OTHER CHILDREN.
I JUST THINK TO MYSELF, "OH, IS THAT SO?"
DEATH OR INJURY, IT'S ALL THE SAME
IKEGAMI, ACHT AND YOU YOU'RE ALL THE SAME.
I'VE BEEN LIKE THAT EVER SINCE.

WHAT A TERRIBLE TIME FOR THIS TO HAPPEN
IT MUST'VE BEEN A STRAY. WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?
I FEEL SORRY FOR IT, BUT LET'S GET RID OF IT QUICK
IT'S ALMOST TIME FOR THE FUNERAL PROCESSION
WHAT A HASSLE
I WAS SCARED.
NO VALUE WHATSOEVER.
LIKE I HAD NO PURPOSE.
LIKE I HAD BEEN TOSSED ASIDE LIKE GARBAGE.
I FELT LIKE IT WAS ME.


IF HE CAN'T TALK TO US OR OTHER CATS?
...WHAT WILL YOU DO IF ACHT STOPS TALKING FOREVER?
BUT...


YES...
YOU DON'T CARE AT ALL?
SO NOW THAT ACHT'S NOT TALKING, YOU'RE GOING TO ISOLATE YOURSELF AGAIN?

AND WHAT ABOUT YOU, NARUSAWA?
HE'LL BE COMPLETELY ALONE.

!
YOU'RE RIGHT.

I DON'T FEEL ANYTHING.

THAT'S WHY...
...ACHT WON'T TALK TO ME.

YES.
DO YOU REALLY NOT CARE? REALLY NOT FEEL ANYTHING?
DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT?
THAT CAN'T BE!

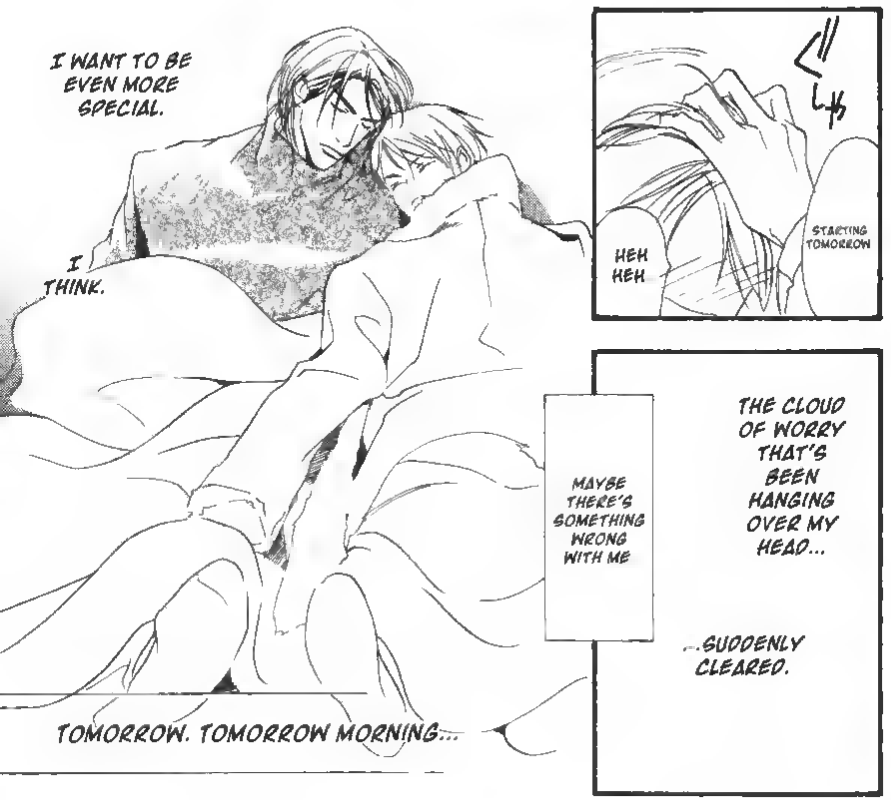
BUT IF YOU WEREN'T EVEN ANGRY..
...THEN I FEEL LIKE AN IDIOT
.....
YEAH, YOU GOT ME.
WHAT?! SO YOU REALLY WERE EXPERIMENTING ON ME!
Heh heh!
I'm right?!
THAT'S SO MEAN! HOW CAN YOU LAUGH?!
...AND THAT PISSED ME OFF.
NOT EXACTLY.
YOU WEREN'T DOING WHAT I EXPECTED...

ACHT'S ALWAYS STOOD BY YOU
YOU JUST DON'T GET IT!
NARUSAWA-SAN, YOU'RE SUCH AN IDIOT! HOW CAN YOU BE SO DENSE!
DUMB-ASS!
WERE YOU REALLY OKAY WITH THAT, TOO?
I SAID MEAN THINGS TO YOU, NARUSAWA-SAN
...I WANTED TO APOLOGIZE.
HOW CAN YOU BE SO UNGRATEFUL?!
AND WHAT ABOUT DR. IKEGAMI? HE'S A FRIEND, RIGHT?
I THOUGHT YOU WERE ANGRY BECAUSE I DIDN'T TAKE MY TRAINING SERIOUSLY.
THE TRUTH IS..
WHAT ABOUT... ME?
...THAT YOU DON'T CARE AT ALL.
YOU CAN'T REALLY MEAN..

WHY DO YOU LOOK SO HAPPY ABOUT THAT?
Ha ha!
I DON'T GET IT.
ARE YOU STILL GOING TO TOY WITH ME, LIKE A BALL YOU ROLL AROUND?
I'D BE PRETTY WORN OUT IF I HAD TO ROLL YOU AROUND.
BUT YOU JUST SAID...
YEAH
...YOU HAVE NO INTEREST IN OTHER PEOPLE!
YOU'RE A WALKING CONTRADICTION
BUT YOU...
YOU'RE BRIMMING WITH ENERGY, AND THAT MAKES ME FEEL GOOD

I'M GLAD YOU SAID THAT TO ME.
HMM.
WERE YOU ALWAYS LAUGHING BEHIND MY BACK?
NO, NO HOW DO I PUT THIS?
COMING FROM SOME PEOPLE, EVEN HARSH, CRITICAL WORDS CAN BE SWEET
.....!
WHAT?
Huh?

AM I REALLY SPECIAL TO HIM?
OKAY.


I WANT TO BE EVEN MORE SPECIAL.
I THINK.
TOMORROW. TOMORROW MORNING...


HEH HEH
STARTING TOMORROW


MAYBE THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH ME
THE CLOUD OF WORRY THAT'S BEEN HANGING OVER MY HEAD...
...SUDDENLY CLEARED.

HIS EYES WERE FULL OF DOUBTS. LOST.
"I DON'T FEEL ANY-THING."
THAT WAS ..
...A STRANGE SORT OF CONFIDENCE.

"WELL, WOULD YOU LIKE TO COME TO MY HOUSE?"
WHEN HE LOOKS AT ME WITH THOSE EYES.

...ABOUT YOURSELF.
TELL ME MORE
TELL ME MORE.
UH
NARUSAWA-SAN?
HM?

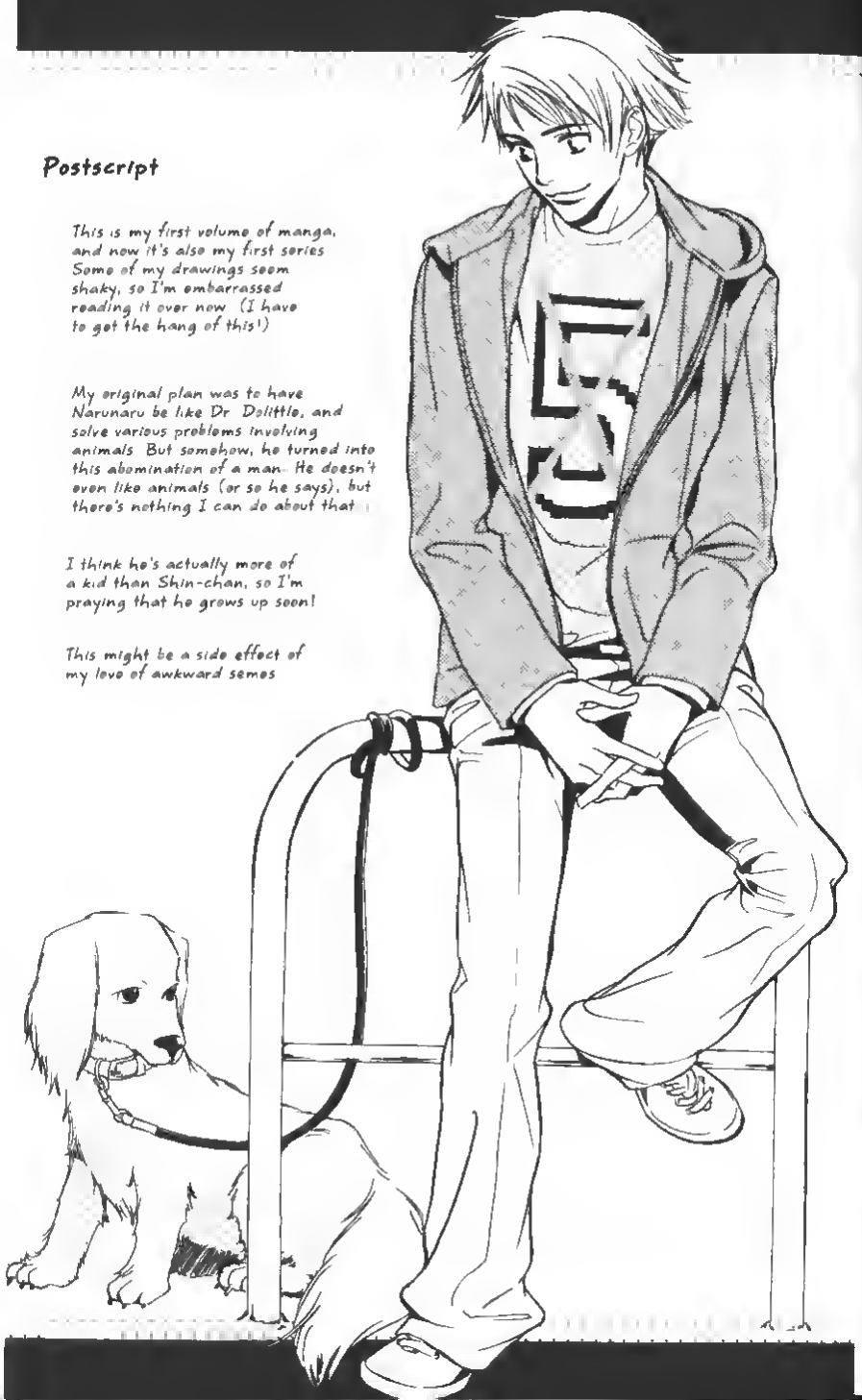
## Postscript

This is my first volume of manga, and now it's also my first series. Some of my drawings seem shaky, so I'm embarrassed reading it over now. (I have to get the hang of this!)

My original plan was to have Narunaru be like Dr. Dolittle, and solve various problems involving animals. But somehow, he turned into this abomination of a man. He doesn't even like animals (or so he says), but there's nothing I can do about that.

I think he's actually more of a kid than Shin-chan, so I'm praying that he grows up soon!

This might be a side effect of my love of awkward semes.



call »04 END

AS THEIR MISUNDERSTANDING BEGINS TO BE CLEARED UP, SHINICHIRO AND NARUSAWA ARE STARTING TO GET A WHOLE LOT CLOSER. UNFORTUNATLEY NARUSAWA MAY BE ABLE TO TALK WITH ANIMALS, BUT HIS PEOPLE SKILLS ARE SORELY LACKING. BETWEEN ACHT STILL REMAINING SILENT AFTER SIX MONTHS, AND A CRAZY NIGHT OF DRINKING AND SEXUAL ADVANCES FROM NARUSAWA'S STUDENTS, WILL SHINICHIRO BE ABLE TO HANDLE THEIR BUDDING RELATIONSHIP?

Long ago, my family also owned sparrows. I think we even raised them the same way Takahashi does.

Our house was like a survival boot camp for our pets. I'm reflecting on the error of my ways as I write this.

I hope we meet again in the next volume!

2003, Yamimaru Enjin

Sorrow! Curse!
Month
Food! Murder! Death!
ONE DAY IKEGAMI RECEIVED A NEW PATIENT
Day
Kill! Fear!
Curse!
Fear!
Belly!
Destruction!
Heme!
He seemed to be manic-depressive.
TWITCH
がし!
Or maybe I should eat you alive? No, I can't, you're too big. What a shame. But there are other possibilities.
Slice you into strips? Let you gorge until your liver bloats? Or perhaps I should skin you and roll you in salt.
Now, shall I boil you or grill you?
Hmm Hmm
Sometimes it seems like his hospital could go bankrupt.
Is that so?
Hey, Narusawa! Remember that crazy dog that came in? Today he's perfectly well-behaved!
Thanks!
The next day